

©Ijc Saints anO Servants of GoB.

THE LIFE
OF
S. ALPHONSO MARIA DE LIGUOPJ,
BISHOP OF ST. AGATHA OF THE GOTHs.
AND FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY
REDEEMER.

“Gaude Maria Virgo, cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in
universo mundo.”—*Antiph. Ecdesiæ.*

PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON,

172, fleet st.; 9, chapel st. Dublin; and derby.

M. D. CCC. XLVIII.

We hereby approve of this Series of Lives of the Canonized Saints and Servants of God, and recommend it to the faithful of our District, as likely to promote the glory of God, the increase of devotion, and the spread of our holy Religion.

Given at Birmingham, this 29th day of October, 1847.

TO
THE REGULAR CLERGY
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND,
THE CHILDREN
OF ST. BENEDICT AND ST. BERNARD,
ST. DOMINICK AND ST. FRANCIS,
AND THE SONS
OF THE HOLY IGNATIUS,
THE GREAT MASTER OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE,
AND THE NURSING-FATHER OF SAINTS AND MARTYRS,
WHO,
IN THE STRAITNESS AND NEGLECT
OF THEIR UNHONOURED CLOISTERS,
OR THE CHEERLESS SOLITUDE
OF THEIR HIRED LODGING,
HAVE JOYFULLY EMBRACED THE POVERTY OF JESUS,
AND EARNED BY LOVING ZEAL
THE CROWN OF MARTYRDOM,
AND WHO,
THROUGH SCENES OF AWFUL SACRILEGE,
AND TIMES OF BITTER PERSECUTION,
THROUGH THE LONG AND WEARY VISITATION
OF ACTIVE MALICE OR OF COLD CONTEMPT,
HAVE PERPETUATED,
AMONGST THEIR UNWORTHY COUNTRYMEN,
THE BLESSED LINEAGE
OF THEIR HOLY FOUNDERS.

St . Wil fr id 's,
Feast or St . Berna r d ,
M. D. CCC. XLVII.

PREFACE.

THE next volume, containing the Life of the Blessed Sebastian of Apparizio, Franciscan Lay-brother, will appear on the 25th of April. The public are requested to excuse the want of punctuality in the publication of this volume, as the delay has been owing to circumstances which no one could control.

Since the Introductory Essay on Canonization was written and in the printer's hands the writer of it has joined the Oratory, and it therefore becomes a duty to state expressly, that no one is responsible for anything in it except the writer himself, and that the Approbation at the beginning of the volume, as will be seen by the wording of it, does not include any expressions of individual opinion contained in notes or prefaces in any of the volumes.

Ei W. Fa b e r . (/

St. Wilfrid's,

Feast of St. Benedict, 1848.

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THE LIFE
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BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

In all ages of the world, the Almighty has raised up extraordinary men to supply the wants of humanity ; and incessantly watching over the welfare of His Church, has, in every succeeding century, provided chosen vessels to defend and to edify it.

In the 18th century, those two most dangerous extremes, impiety and over-strained rigidity, had united to undermine the edifice of the church. Like ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing, libertine philosophy and despairing rigour had striven to penetrate into the heart of the church. A servile fear had expelled the charity of God ; the sacraments, those fountains of life, were abandoned or turned into derision ; the Divine Eucharist, the life-spring of Catholic piety, had become an object of dread, and the spirit of Christianity seemed passing away—but the eye of an Omniscent Providence watched

over it : to confound impiety, to fight against Jansenism, to awaken faith, and kindle love in its source, the sacrament of the altar, God gave to His Church and to the world, a man after His own heart, Alphonso Liguori.

Joseph do Liguori, of an ancient patrician family in Naples, and Anna Caterina Cavalière do Brindes, were the happy parents of Alphonso. Illustrious by birth, and also by his military talents, and the public offices which he filled with integrity and prudence, Don Joseph was, moreover, a man of exemplary piety, and by his devotion to the Passion of our Lord he obtained many signal graces. His wife was a woman of singular virtue, and descended from parents equally remarkable for their piety and their rank. Devoted to prayer, loving the poor, and denying herself, she practised mortification, abstained from worldly amusements, and was to be found most frequently in the house of God.

Happy the man who on his entrance into life is animated by the watchful eye of a virtuous and tender mother ; her very look has a magical influence over the soul of her child ; and St. Alphonso had this unspeakable happiness. He was born on the 27th of September, 1696, in the vicinity of Naples at Marianella, where his parents had a country-house ; and two days after he was taken to Naples, to be baptised in the church of Saint Mary of Virgins. The day on which he was born, was the feast of the martyrs Saints Cosmas and Damian, and he received

their names, being called Alphonso Mary Antonio John Francis Cosmas Damian Michel-Angelo ; tho first names in memory of his ancestors, tho others in honour of those Saints, and of the archangel on whose day ho was baptised. From the hour of his birth, ho was placed in a special manner under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, that in all his necessities he might find in her an advocate and mother.

If it be true, as St. Ambrose has said, that at their birth the just bring joy and consolation, what happiness must not Don Joseph and Donna Anna have experienced on seeing their first-born son ! It was with the most lively and tender gratitude that they received him from tho hand of God, and they testified this, by consecrating their infant in a special manner to his Heavenly Father. Their joy was increased when Saint Francis Jerome of the Society of Jesus foretold the future sanctity of the little Alphonso. This Jesuit foresaw with a prophetic eye how dear to God, and how beneficial to tho Church, tho infant would become. Ho took him from the arms of his mother, and blessing him he said, “ This little child will live to a great age, even until ninety years ; he will bo a bishop, and will perform great things for Jesus Christ.” These words proceeding from the lips of a man renowned for his sanctity, were received as a prophecy, and Alphonso was henceforth regarded as a special gift from Heaven, destined to procure the salvation of souls and promote the glory of Jesus Christ.

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CHAPTER II.

Contrary to the usual custom among the nobles, the early education of Alphonso was not confided to strangers, his mother superintended it herself. This noble lady knew her duty, and would allow no other to instruct her son in the knowledge of religion. The brother of Alphonso, Don Gaetano, has recorded, that every morning after having blessed her children, she made them pray to God, and every evening she assembled them around her, and taught them the elements of the Christian Faith, reciting the rosary with them and other prayers in honour of different saints. She was careful in preventing them from associating with other children of their age; she wished that grace should anticipate in them the malice of sin, and that they might early be taught to hate it; she therefore took them every week to confess in the Church of the Oratorian Fathers of St. Jerome, to her own director, Father D. Thomas Pagano. It was thus she guided her dear Alphonso, and made him truly holy. Above all she endeavoured to kindle in his heart a tender love for Jesus Christ, and a filial confidence in Mary; and if the mother was so careful to cultivate holiness in her son, Providence was not less attentive to enrich him with grace. He was born with a heart so ready to receive the impressions of grace, that piety

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and love of virtue seemed natural to him. One might say, that in him virtue anticipated age, so early did he show maturity in his devotions.

Even in childhood, he knew not the ordinary amusements of infancy, but placed all his delight in erecting little altars, and celebrating in his childish manner the feasts of different saints. When he was more advanced in age, and had tasted in the practice of piety the sweets of celestial communications, he might be seen continually presenting himself before God, and putting a holy effusion of heart into his intercourse with Him. Thus he so early began to receive those precious graces which God bestows on souls destined to the highest degrees of sanctity.

At this time the Fathers of St. Jerome directed a fervent Congregation, having for its object the spiritual welfare of the young nobility. The parents of Alphonso did not neglect such an opportunity, but placed him under their care, when he was only nine years old, and his exemplary conduct and great devotion wore the admiration of these holy fathers. He came early every Sunday morning to the Congregation ; and although so young, he was docile and submissive to the slightest command of the superiors, attentive and recollected during the devotional exercises, greedily swallowing the general instructions, and even over-anxious in his desire to profit by them. He regularly confessed to Father Thomas Pagano, and when arrived at the proper age, received the Holy Communion from his hands. It was a lovely spectacle to

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see this young child on his knees hearing mass with singular devotion, and approaching the holy table with the greatest fervour. He prepared himself always by the aid of little books of piety which he devoutly held in his hands, and never retired without kneeling long to make acts of thanksgiving.

As Alphonso advanced in age, his mother redoubled her solicitude; not content with all he learned under these excellent fathers, she took care to instruct him herself on the manner of performing his devotions, and acquitting himself of his other duties. She spoke to him of the enormity of sin, of the hell which it merited, of the great displeasure the slightest fault gave to the heart of Jesus Christ. All this made much impression on him, and D. Anna rejoiced to find in her son a soul so docile and a mind so upright. What was most admirable in this young child, was his constancy in his devotional exercises. When the hour arrived for his joining his mother in some devout practice, he presented himself before her, nor was he less punctual in other pious exercises which he imposed upon himself.

When he had attained his twelfth year, his aptitude for prayer was not only more than ordinary, it was sublime. Among many traits which proved his wonderful piety, there is one very remarkable, related by an eye-witness, Don Anthony Villani, the relative of Peter Sersale, brother to the cardinal of that name. The Fathers of St. Jerome were in the habit every Sunday after Vespers, of taking the young gentle-

men of their Congregation to some country-house to amuse themselves. It happened on one occasion that they went to the house of the Prince do la Riccia, situated on the mountain of Miradois. The young people began to amuse themselves with a game called the game of oranges. Alphonso was asked to join, but excused himself on the plea of not knowing the game ; his companions, however, urged him so much, that at length he consented. Fortune favoured him, and he gained thirty times running. This success made his companions jealous, and one, older than him, exclaimed in a rage, “ It was you who did not know the game, was it ! ” adding in his fury a very indecent expression. Alphonso reddened when he heard it, and with an air of severity turned towards his companions and said, “ How is this, shall God be offended for the sake of a few miserable pence ? take back your money and throwing on the ground what he had won, he turned his back on his companions with a holy indignation, and secreted himself in another part of the garden. But this was not all, for when evening came, and the young people were about to return, he was nowhere to be found. They called him, but they called in vain, and as night was approaching every one went to seek him. What was their surprise when they discovered him on his knees, before a picture of the Blessed Virgin which he had with him, and had placed upon a laurel branch. He was quite absorbed, and so ravished in God,

that it was some time before ho came to himself notwithstanding the noise his companions made.

Anthony Villani, who was present at this scene, being once on a visit at Ciorani, (ono of tho houses belonging to tho Order of Rcdcmp-torists, founded by St. Alphonse,) and talking of his virtues, said, while his eyes filled with tears, “lie was a saint ovon in his childhood,” and then told tho anecdote above related.

To tho latest period of his life Alphonse continued to acknowledge his obligations to his mother, for tho great care sho had taken of him during his childhood; ho regarded tho happiness of having had such a mother, as ono of tho greatest blessings ho had ever received from God, and was wont to say, “If I must admit that there was anything good in me as a child, and if I wore kept from wickedness, I owe it entirely to tho tender solicitude of my mother.” His father being often obliged to make excursions with tho galleys, could not apply himself as ho would have wished to the education of his children, and consequently this fell upon his mother; ho once said, “At tho death of my father, I refused to go to Naples, offering to God tho sacrifico of a duty which nature claimed from mo; but when my mother is dying, if I am not otherwise prevented, I shall not havo tho courage to refuse assisting her.”

CHAPTER III.

The education of the young Alphonso was not conducted in a public school, as is usual with the nobility, but excellent private masters were procured for him to teach him belles-lettres; for D. Joseph and D. Anna, fearing that in a college the innocence of their son would run some danger, and that intercourse with other young men might tarnish its lustre, would have him continually under their own eyes, and sheltered from every occasion of sin. His grammar master was the learned Dominic Buonaccio, a native of Calabria, and a man of piety and irreproachable morals. Although he was chiefly appointed to teach him belles-lettres, he did not neglect to inculcate upon him the importance of living as a good Christian, and to show him how much vice defiled and dishonoured a man. Certainly his master found little difficulty in conducting his education; his naturally happy disposition and inclination towards virtue, much abridged the lessons of this good priest, as well in reference to science as to spiritual matters. It may be said, that nature and grace rivalled each other in enriching with their gifts this noble young man. His mind was quick and penetrating, his memory faithful and retentive, and he combined great docility with an ardent desire for instruction. These excellent qualities produced rapid pro-

gross in his studios, and gave great satisfaction both to master and parents.

As the father and mother of Alphonso would not only make their son a man of letters and a good Christian, but also an accomplished gentleman, they took care to adorn his mind with every other species of knowledge necessary to form a distinguished education. He was yet a child when they gave him masters in drawing, painting, and architecture. He succeeded admirably in all these arts; even in his old age he sketched pictures sometimes of the infant Jesus, or of Jesus crucified, or of the Blessed Virgin, and engraved several copies for the use of his Congregation. At the house of Ciorani, wishing to make them understand in a palpable manner what a mass of abomination man is in himself, he designed with smoke the corpse of Alexander the Great, surrounded by vermin and all disfigured, with this inscription underneath, “Such is the end of all human grandeur.” Verses were afterwards found which he had made on the subject. In the refectory of the House of Illiceto, is another skeleton designed by him, of a large size and surrounded by filth and vermin. They preserve also in the church of this house an ancient portrait of the Blessed Virgin, which had been retouched by the pencil of Alphonso, and restored to its original lustre. There also is a beautiful landscape of his in oil on the draperies which ornament the grand altar. It represents the mystery of the Nativity, the infant Jesus adored by the shepherds,

the holy Virgin and St. Joseph. Our Saint was not less skilled in architecture; if he did not sketch the plans for the new houses of his Congregation, the architects had always to submit to his criticisms. His father, who was exceedingly fond of music, wished him also to excel in that art. He gave orders that he should apply himself three hours daily to study music with a master, and so much importance did he attach to this, that if he could not himself assist at the lesson, he locked the door upon master and pupil while he went about his own affairs. Before Alphonso had attained his twelfth year, he touched the harpsichord with the hand of a master.

In his later years he regretted the time he had spent in acquiring this accomplishment. "Fool that I have been," said he one day, looking at the harpsichord, "to have lost so much time on that! but it was right to obey my father, and he would have it so." He excelled so much both in music and poetry, that even in his old age he wrote and composed wonderfully well. Among others there is a little duct between the soul and Jesus suffering, which he caused to be sung between the catechising and the sermon, in one of the churches of Naples, while they gave spiritual exercises there. This talent for Latin and Italian poetry would have taken a higher flight had he not had in view that which would encourage the devotion of the people, rather than that which would gratify the taste. We may see this in the numerous hymns he

composed, among which are many that excel, forcing us to recognise in them the hand of a master.

Having finished the study of belles-lettres, and learned the Greek and the French languages, he applied himself to the study of philosophy and mathematics. We need not inquire whether he succeeded; the proof may be found in the different theological and metaphysical works which he afterwards published against the modern infidels. He succeeded equally in geography and cosmography, and knew these sciences so well, that he taught them to the students in the principal establishment of the order which he founded.

D. Joseph, ambitious of seeing his son distinguish himself in the magistracy, from the talents with which he was adorned, wished him, when his philosophy and other studies were finished, to apply himself to civil and canonical law. He gave him two learned masters, who enjoyed a great reputation in Naples. Alphonse was no less successful in this new career. His progress excited general admiration, and all prognosticated that the young Liguori would one day fill the most brilliant offices in the Neapolitan magistracy.

He who in his infancy knew how to disengage himself from the amusements of his age, did not change in his youth; he was never eager to pursue even the lawful pleasures his parents were willing to procure for him: on the contrary, he gave himself up with ardour to labour

and study, as if he had been born in an inferior rank. Everything served for food to his application ; and if his fondness for science made him delight in study, D. Joseph, on his part, spared nothing to encourage these happy dispositions, putting every thing in operation to second and promote them. Among these numerous occupations, all the recreation he was permitted to take, was with D. Charles Cito, at whose house he was allowed to pass an hour in the evening, to play at cards with other young people of irreproachable character who visited there. The favourite games of the young men were *terzillio*, *ombre*, and such like, then usual in good society, in which the mind found recreation and exercise, while the morals received no damage.

Those amusements had very strict bounds, D. Joseph wishing that they might be rather a means of advancing than retarding him in his studies, and that the short relaxation might enable him to resume them again with renewed vigour. He was always displeased when his son stayed beyond the appointed time ; for it sometimes happened that Alphonso was rather late. On one of these occasions, wishing to mortify him, he removed all his books from the table, and substituted for them packs of cards. Alphonso on his return was stupified and amazed, but his father looked at him and said, “Behold your studies, these are the authors who render you so very exact in returning at the appointed hour.” This mortification was felt most sensibly, and nothing else was necessary to make

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him blush and strive more punctually than ever to obey his father's injunctions.

In his old age he mentioned, that at the same time he had been very fond of hunting, but never indulged in it except on days when he was dispensed from study, adding, that the birds were fortunate that had to do with him, for notwithstanding all his endeavours, he rarely killed one. He would then seem to regret having spoken of such things, and say, "I abandoned the chase of birds, to hunt for souls," making all who heard him feel how agreeable this was to God, and how full of consolation for apostolic men.

Such were the useful and interesting occupations of the young Alphonso; and we believe his parents were wise enough to interdict other accomplishments usually taught, and regarded by worldly persons as indispensable. They looked upon dancing as a dangerous amusement for the soul, and on fencing, as exposing both soul and body to many dangers.

CHAPTER IV.

Alphonso devoted himself so successfully to the study of jurisprudence, that before his sixteenth year he was master of it. According to the register deposited in the hands of D. Caracciola d' Avellino, who had the charge of conferring on the young candidates the grado of Doctor, he received his degree on the 21st of

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January, 1713, amidst general applause. He had previously obtained a dispensation of three years and nine months, being little more than sixteen years old.

Although so young, he might from that time be seen constantly before the tribunals of Naples, listening with an ardent avidity for instruction to the numerous decisions of council, so much respected in that town. At first his father placed him with a celebrated advocate called Pcronni ; but after the death of this man, he was placed with another jurisconsult, not less esteemed, of the name of Jovcue. It was about this period that our Saint began to deny himself all kinds of amusement, and even to renounce the agreeable soirees in the house of D. Cito. lie associated only with the president, Dominic Caravita, a man as pious as he was learned, inferior to none in the science of civil and canon laws.

His house was then a species of academy for studious young men. The most virtuous and learned in legal matters used to meet there. The president took great pleasure in seeing himself surrounded by so many young candidates for fame, and he did all in his power to render them skilful in discussing points of law, and in the choice of proper words. Every evening he held conferences, in which they treated the most difficult questions, each arming himself with the point of law he judged most favourable to his opinion, while the president adopted or rejected their conclusions.

Alphonso had not yet attained his 20th year, when he saw himself surrounded by numerous clients, and seated before the tribunals side by side with the most distinguished advocates. His father's family at that time included many friends and relations among the principal senators. D. James Salerno, uncle of Alphonso, and husband of Antoinette de Liguori, his father's sister; D. Joseph Cavalieri, the brother of his mother; the regent do Miro, who loved him with paternal tenderness; the governor D. Muzio do Majo was strongly attached to his family, and many others besides. These men of quality, knowing his talents, his good conduct, and desire of advancement, united all their endeavours to procure him distinguished clients. He himself knew so well how to gain public esteem, that in a short time the most important causes were confided to him. Those who knew him in those days bear witness to the remarkable talent he exhibited as advocate. They admired his general information, his clear views, his precision in expressing himself, and his great probity and detestation of all chicanery. The rules by which he regulated his conduct as a lawyer, cannot be too generally known; for if they were imitated, the whole face of society would be renovated. They consisted of twelve—

1st. Never to accept unjust causes, for they are pernicious to the conscience, and hurtful to honour.

2nd. Never to defend a cause by illicit and unjust means.

3rd. Never to burden clients with superfluous expenses.

4th. To defend the cause of our clients with tho same care as wo would our own.

5th. To study carefully the details of a process, in order to draw arguments from them that may effectually help the defence.

6th. As the dilatorincss and negligence of lawyers arc often prejudicial to clients, it is necessary to reimburse the loss caused in this way, otherwise we sin against justice.

7th. To implore tho assistance of God that we may succeed, because God is the protector of justice.

8th. A lawyer must not load himself with matters which surpass his talents or his strength, or if ho foresee that ho will not have leisure to prepare his defence.

9th. Justice and probity should be the characteristics of a lawyer, and he ought to preserve them as tho apple of his eye.

10th. A lawyer who loses a cause by negligence, contracts the obligation of making up all tho losses of his client.

11th. In the defence of a cause it is necessary to be true, sincere, respectful, and reasonable.

12th. The qualities requisite for a lawyer, are knowledge, diligence, truth, fidelity, and justice.

Guided by such rules, is it to bo wondered that he gained an ascendancy over all hearts, and so enchanted his audience when he spoke,

that not only the judges, but even his adversaries, often ranged themselves on his side : such must ever be the ultimate effects of truth and honour ! Adorned with virtues, and endowed with talents, all desired to confide their interests to his care, and sought to have him for a defender.

If Alphonso desired to strike out a brilliant path for himself as a lawyer, he was no less anxious to increase in virtue and render himself dear to God. Two years after receiving the gown, he advanced from the Congregation of young nobles to that of Doctors, established in the house of the Fathers of St. Jerome, that is, the Fathers of the Oratory, he was admitted on the 15th August, 1715, being then nineteen years old. This Congregation was, as it is now, the edification of the town of Naples, because of the great good done by its members. These priests, animated by the spirit of St. Philip their founder, omitted nothing that could inspire their pupils with the spirit of Jesus Christ, and render them as dear to God, as they were useful to the state. Alphonso responded to all the care they had lavished on him ; in his infancy he had tasted the milk of piety among these fathers, and there he would also in his young manhood fortify himself with more solid nourishment.

Besides frequenting the Congregation, Alphonso often visited F. Thomas Pagano, his spiritual director, whom he regarded as his Guardian Angel. To him he exposed all his doubts and fears, and never deviated from his counsels. It

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is certain that as a young man and a lawyer, far from relaxing in his piety and devotion, he only made more and more progress. He frequented the sacraments, he visited the sick in the hospitals, he loved prayer, to which he joined the mortification of his passions and his senses. He never went to the law courts before he had heard mass and finished in the church his other devotional exercises.

Every eight days he went to the Congregation, acquitting himself with diligence of all the duties prescribed to the members. D. Deodat de Scnlis, a gentleman of the town of Vitri, has recorded, that at this time he remembered him devoting himself with the other brethren to the service of the sick in the Hospital of Incurables, and though clothed in his lawyer's gown, making their beds, and giving them food with exemplary devotion and charity.

In this Congregation every one admired him for the modesty and profound recollection with which he acquitted himself of his functions. He ever after retained a great attachment to these Oratorian Fathers, and never failed to visit them when he came to Naples, going there even during the few days he was in that town after being made Bishop.

If Alphonso gave himself to piety with so much assiduity, his father was no less anxious to confirm him in these dispositions, he wished his son annually to make with him the spiritual exercises in the house called Conocchia, kept for this purpose by the Jesuits, or in the house

directed by the Missionaries of St. Vincent of Paul ; and if sometimes ho was prevented by excursions he was obliged to take in the galleys, ho wished Alphonso to make the retreat alone, to regulate the affairs of his conscience. Alphonso afterwards spoke of these retreats as having made a great impression upon him, and of having drawn from them tho most salutary fruits.

It was at this -time also that he began to have a most especial love for the holy virtue of purity, regarding it as the most precious ornament of his soul. During the whole period of his youth no one ever remarked in his conversations with young companions a sign or a word that could indicato a shadow of impropriety. Everything about him proclaimed his modesty, and at all times he practised the most perfect personal respect.

A life so exemplary could not fail to produce the most abundant fruits ; and although all the good resulting from it in the edification of others will only bo known in heaven, yet it has pleased Providence that one instance should be upon record—the conversion of a slave in his father’s house. D. Joseph, as commander of tho galleys, had several slaves in his service ; one of them, whose dispositions were good, was selected to Avail upon Alphonso. He soon after manifested an inclination to become Christian, and when asked what had made him think of such a thing, ho replied, “Tho example of my young master has made a great impression on me ; for

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it is impossible that that religion can be false, which makes him lead a life so pure and holy." Father Mastrilla, of the Congregation of St. Jerome, and a relation of Alphonso, undertook to instruct him ; but soon after he became sick and was sent to the hospital. One evening he seemed very uneasy, and expressed a great desire to see his master immediately, who came to him as soon as he was told, Father Mastrilla being also sent for. Immediately on their arrival he requested to be baptised, saying, "I have seen the Madonna, St. Joseph, and St. Joachim, and they have told me I must be baptised now, because they would have me in Paradiso." The priest replied that his illness was not dangerous, and besides he was not sufficiently instructed to receive baptism. "Let your Reverence interrogate me," replied the slave, "for I am prepared to answer all your questions." In fact, he replied with the utmost precision and accuracy to every question. He was baptised, and then bid to repose a little after the fatigue. "This is not a time to rest," he said, "for I must go immediately to Paradiso." They all laughed at his reply, for his sickness was not a dangerous one ; but in about half an hour this poor slave, his countenance radiant with joy, surrendered his pure soul into the hands of his Creator. He was the only one among many Mahomedan slaves who had ever become Christian, notwithstanding the numerous attempts that were made to convert them.

Alphonso was now approaching his twentieth year, and seeing the progress he daily made in the career of the law, every one prognosticated, that with such distinguished talents, and such powerful family interest, he would, ere long, attain the highest magisterial dignities, and occupy one of the most important places in the Neapolitan senate. These rare prerogatives were still more enhanced by all the qualities that could be wished for in a young nobleman. A great soul, a noble love of glory, amiable and engaging manners, joined to irreproachable conduct, made the first families in Naples anxious for him to form a matrimonial alliance with their daughters. Among all the parties who presented themselves, the choice of D. Joseph fell upon D. Theresa, the only daughter of D. Francis de Liguori, Prince of Prcsiccio, a rich heiress, who was also nearly allied to the family. Every one believed that the Prince D. Francis would have no more children, and D. Joseph expected to acquire for Alphonso a considerable fortune.

He spoke to the prince and princess, through the medium of another relation, D. Vespasea de Liguori. The prince entered warmly into the arrangement, regarding it as an honour for his daughter to become the wife of such a young man. The affair was considered as arranged. The two families continually interchanged visits, and if the betrothal was delayed, it was only until Alphonso had advanced further in the law, and the princess had attained a more ma-

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turc ago ; as for Alphonso, he took no part in the matter, and showed not the least intention of marrying.

While this affair was in progress, the princess, contrary to all expectation, became pregnant, and this incident changed immediately the designs of D. Joseph, who no longer found in the marriage the advantages he had originally contemplated for his house. His ardour cooled, and when the princess was brought to bed of a son he withdrew himself entirely. This coolness caused great displeasure to D. Theresa, and still more to her parents.

At the end of a few months the infant died, and the father of Alphonso began again to frequent the house, and to speak of his original proposals. Although they felt themselves aggrieved, the prince and princess were willing to renew the negotiations ; but Theresa, who had seen herself despised because of the birth of her infant brother, would not listen to those new proposals. “When my brother was alive,” said she, “I was not considered a suitable match for Alphonso do Liguori ; but now he is dead they think it advisable—it is my fortune, and not myself, whom they seek. I know enough of the world, and now I wish to have nothing more to do with it. I desire to take Jesus Christ for my Spouse.” She put her resolution into practice, and entered into a convent of the Holy Sacrament, or of St. Mary Magdaleno do Pazzi : her vocation being evident, she took the veil on the 8th of March, 1719.

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This rupture between Alphonso and Theresa was an arrangement of Providence, to withdraw both of them from the dangers of the world. God blessed the step taken by Theresa, and she became an eminent Saint. From the moment she entered the convent she gave herself entirely to Jesus Christ, and spared no sacrifice in order to please Him. Her life was short, but full of merits, and she died in the odour of sanctity the 30th of October, 1724. Soon after her death, Alphonso, at the request of the superior of the convent, wrote the edifying Life of her who had been intended for his wife.

A circumstance occurred about this time which shows the perfect submission of Alphonso to his father, and the strictness with which D. Joseph required this virtue from his son. One evening there was at the house a party of ladies and gentlemen, and it happened that one of the domestics showed stupidity in attending to the guests as they arrived. His negligence displeased D. Joseph, who scolded the servant, and reproached him with his inattention ; it was an involuntary fault, yet D. Joseph did not cease to grumble at him as he went and came. Alphonso was sorry for the man, and said to his father, “What a noise you make about it, my father ; when once you begin, you can never end.” This speech displeased D. Joseph, who being in bad humour with the servant, was angry that Alphonso should take his part, and so far forgot himself as to give his son a blow in the face. Alphonso was confused, but said not

a word, and, deeply humiliated, withdrew immediately to his room. The hour of supper came, and as he did not appear his mother went to call him, and found him bathed in tears, deploring the want of respect he had shown towards his father. He confessed how wrong he had been, and begged she would intercede for him and obtain forgiveness ; accompanied by his mother, he went to his father and asked him to forgive him. D. Joseph, affected by his submission and repentance, embraced him and blessed him, and if the fault of his son had wounded him, he was more touched and consoled by seeing him so sincerely humble. This single anecdote shows how respectful Alphonso continued to be towards his father, although he was then old enough to be one of the first advocates at the Neapolitan bar.

CHAPTER V.

Alphonso had never ceased to distinguish himself in the practice of virtue ; but man has nothing more to fear than his own inconstancy. The passions are born with us, they grow with our growth, and however much they may be deadened by education and grace, they are nevertheless alive and ready to be reanimated by the first occasion that awakens them, and delivers us up to the combat. Alphonso confessed in his old age, that at this period of his

life his piety became cold, and that he was in danger of losing his soul, of losing his God. His father obliged him to accompany him into society ; he frequented the theatres, and often, although always by obedience, he took part in a private play. These were, it is true, innocent amusements, yet his mind was dissipated little by little, and at length he no longer exhibited great ardour in the pursuit of virtue, and no longer tasted that divine manna which had once formed the delight of his heart. Added to this, were the applauses he received on all sides, the proposals of marriage, the flattering messages brought by valets, the compliments which were showered upon him by ladies and their relations ; in short, everything flattered his passions, his heart was tainted, and he lost his first fervour. In this state of spiritual coldness, the slightest cause was sufficient to make him omit some one of his pious practices : he has said himself, that if he had remained much longer in this dangerous position, he could not have avoided soon falling into some great sin ; but the watchful eye of that Providence which guided him, failed not to send him timely aid, and with a peculiar and paternal care made him enter into himself.

Alphonso was on terms of the most intimate friendship with I). F. Cape-Celatro, Duke of Casabona, a young man of his own age, whose morals were unexceptionable. Alarmed at seeing his friend beginning to be negligent in the service of God, or perhaps wishing to kindle his

own fervour, he proposed that he should join him in making a retreat during Lent in the house of the Missionaries of St. Vincent of Paul, which was then, as it is now, one of those institutions, where by means of spiritual exercises the heart is animated and purified, and in the furnace of Divine Love the dross contracted in the world is separated from the gold. Alphonso with his friend and some others went there the 26th of March, 1722. The retreat was conducted by F. Vincent Cutica, who was then superior. This holy missionary, so justly celebrated for the unction that flowed from his heart and his lips, made his hearers weigh well the comparative value of time and eternity ; he showed them so clearly the loathsomeness of sin, and the beauty of virtue, that those exercises produced a rich harvest to the Divine Father of the Christian family.

Alphonso was among those who profited most. Grace, which followed and pursued him incessantly, struck at the door of his heart, making him feel how he had fallen from his first fervour ; he saw that in following the world, he was pasturing on its vanities, that he was loving God but in a secondary manner, and taking his place at the table of the Lamb rather as a guest already satiated, than as one burning with desire. The retreat passed in meditation was for him as dew falling on a parched soil ; it made the seeds of piety revive and fructify, where the thorns of passion had begun to choke them. The Divine Light penetrated his soul at a pro-

pitious moment, he deplored his tepidity, and made a solemn promise to God to quit that mode of life which he had so inconsiderately engaged in, and over which he lamented and wept. Even in old age he remembered this period of his life with horror ; never ceasing to regret and repent it. How much he deplored his wanderings, may be seen in his “Visits to the Blessed Sacrament,” where he says, “Believe me, all is folly ; festivals, spectacles, company, games, these are the joys of the world, but joys full of gall and bitterness.” “Believe me,” he adds, “for I have made the experiment, and bitterly deplore it ! ”

A lamentable and recent event completed his spiritual restoration. The Fathers of the Mission of St. Vincent had been giving a retreat in their house at Florence, to a gentleman who had lived in criminal intercourse with a lady who died before making her peace with God. While this gentleman, in the bitterness of his repentance, was imploring the Divine Mercy for the companion of his guilt, she appeared to him and said, “Pray not for me, for I am damned;” after which, to convince him of the reality of her reappearance, she placed her hand on the table before which he knelt in prayer, and the part which she touched was burned.* This event caused Alphonso to reflect very deeply, and he was so much touched by it, that he resolved to

† This table is still preserved in Naples, being brought from Florence by one of the Fathers.

detach himself from the world, and, above all, to think no more of marriage, nor of the vanities of the age. Prostrate before the crucifix he formed the resolution always to preserve his chastity, and resolutely apply himself to the salvation of his soul. Heaven granted him all the graces for which he asked on this occasion, and if he had asked more he would have obtained them. But the Lord delayed to another opportunity the benedictions He had designed for him in His eternal decrees. Alphonso always acknowledged that these holy exercises had been for him one of the greatest blessings he ever received from the Divine Mercy, and often said, that under God, he owed it to his friend, Cape-Celatro, that he had not been the slave of the world and a prey to his own passions.

From the manner in which he sometimes spoke of this period of his life, we might be led at the first glance to imagine he had lost his innocence; but it was not so. The saints always speak in exaggerated terms of their faults; and besides, we have the testimony of many who directed his conscience, that he had never committed a mortal sin. On one occasion, speaking of himself, he said, "I have frequented the theatres, but thanks be to God, I never committed even a venial sin there, for I went to hear the music, which absorbed all my attention, and hindered me from thinking of any other thing." Even at the time when he lived carelessly, every one regarded him as a holy young man of pure and irreproachable manners. And his intimate

friend, D. Balthazar Cito, on being asked if he ever perceived any lightness in his conduct, replied, bowing his head respectfully, “No ; he was always a most virtuous young man ; I should blaspheme if I said otherwise.”

Among many other fruits which Alphonso gathered in this retreat, was an especial and tender confidence towards Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament. Besides approaching the Holy Table several times a-week, he went every day to visit the Holy Sacrament in the Church where the forty-hours' adoration was made, and there he remained, not a few minutes, as devotees ordinarily do, but for hours in contemplation, edifying every one around him, while he filled his own heart with the sweetest consolation. It was a beautiful sight to see him at the foot of the altar, decorated with the insignia of his rank. He often purchased flowers to adorn the altar of his parish church ; and during his whole life he had a particular devotion for ornamenting altars, procuring the rarest seeds, and cultivating them himself to embellish the altars of the churches of his Congregation. He envied those innocent creatures, (he says in one of the hymns he composed,) for being destined to rest night and day near their Creator. He recommended this practice to the rectors of the houses of his Congregation, for he loved to see the altars adorned with the most odoriferous flowers. As a recompense for the homage he paid to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, it became the source of all the graces bestowed upon

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him through life. If he disengaged himself from the world and conquered his own nature, he confessed he owed it entirely to Jesus in the Holy Sacrament.

The following year, in March, 1723, his father being in Naples, they withdrew together to the house of the same Missionary Fathers to make another retreat. And as abundant rain renders the earth fruitful, he received still more grace, and was confirmed in his resolution of observing celibacy, and consecrating himself more than ever to God ; he determined to yield up his birthright to his brother Hercules, although he had not yet decided to abandon the law. It was thus that grace gently prepared him for the designs God had upon him ; and without seeing the consequences, he disentangled himself from everything that could obstruct the benedictions of Heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

The treaty of marriage with Theresa do Liguori having been broken, 1). Joseph projected another with the daughter of Dominic del Balzo, Duke of Prosenzano, an amiable and noble lady, and, without consulting his son, he made proposals to the prince, who at once agreed to them. After the first overtures, the two families began to visit ; but all this displeased Alphonso, who had other objects than

tho world and its pleasures to occupy his mind. Ho had not tho courage, however, to speak openly to his father, who he know would be very indignant at his resolutions; and with the view of temporising, he frequented tho house of Presenzauo, although very unwillingly, and often said afterwards, that in the midst of amusements there he felt upon thorns, and thought only of the moment when his martyrdom would end.

When D. Joseph saw tho indifference of his son, ho did all in his power to overcome it, by placing before him the singular good qualities of tho lady, her superior education, her cultivated mind and manners, all which rendered her a desirable match ; but Alphonso not daring to refuse decidedly, excused himself by saying, that weakness in his chest, and tendency to asthma, warned him not to think of marriage. His father attributed all these excuses to bashfulness, and continued to take him often with him to the house of the duke ; and not to displease his father, ho accompanied him thither, but occupied himself with anything but striving to please the lady, taking part in the conversation with so much modesty and reserve, that no one could suspect what was passing between the families. On every occasion he behaved with tho greatest circumspection ;*

• It happened one evening at the Duke's house that he was invited to touch the harpsichord ; he willingly consented, when the young lady proposed to accompany him in a song ; she rose and stood near him, turning her face towards him ; he immediately turned his head to the other side, and she thinking it accidental

yet D. Joseph did all he could to hasten the marriage, while Alphonso continued to excuse himself on the plea of bad health. Seeing at length that his excuses were unavailing, he opened his mind to his mother, and declared to her that nothing would induce him to connect himself with the world, begging her to persuade his father to cease his importunities. I). Anna was vexed at her son's determination, for she was as anxious for his marriage as her husband could be, and tried to persuade him of the advantages he would derive from his father's arrangements, and the displeasure his refusal would cause—but to no purpose; he expressed his resolution to throw all possible difficulties in the way of his father negotiating any marriage for him, and the young lady herself, seeing his coldness, declared her unwillingness to marry a young man who would hardly look at her.

Things were in this state, when God, who had other designs upon Alphonso, changed the aspect of affairs, and demolished at one blow all the worldly hopes of D. Joseph for his son. The tribunals of Naples were at this time occupied with a feudal process of great importance, between the Grand Duke of Tuscany.

moved round; no sooner had she done so, than he again turned from her. The young princess perceiving the truth, was offended, thinking his indifference proceeded from contempt; and turning to the company, she said, "It would seem the young gentleman has suddenly become moon-struck," and so saying she withdrew, he was much mortified, but the others were edified by his admirable modesty.

and one of the most powerful nobles of the realm : about six hundred thousand ducats depended on the decision. Alphonso undertook the cause of the nobleman, and after an entire month passed in the most careful study of the case, he believed ho had discovered facts so evident, and reasons so strong, that they could not fail to gain a decision in favour of his client. Tho day at length arrived. Dominic Caravita occupied tho president's chair. Alphonso advanced with an air of triumph, which announced his certainty of victory. He began his speech, gave his reasons, quoted tho laws and arrets, and, in short, did all that could bo done to defend tho cause he advocated. Tho lawyers were filled with admiration of his eloquence, and tho solidity of his arguments, and no one doubted the young advocate's success ; even the President Caravita could not help showing in his countenance tho decision he was about to pronounce in his favour. But amidst tho general admiration and certainty of success, all at once ho lost his process, and lost it with dishonour !

Notwithstanding ho had carefully examined over and over the details of tho process, ho was completely mistaken regarding the sense of one document, which constituted tho right of the adverse party. The advocate of the Grand Duke perceived the mistake, but ho allowed Alphonso to continue his eloquent address to the end without interruption ; as soon, however, as ho had finished, he rose, and said with cutting coolness, “ Sir, the case is not exactly

what you suppose it to be ; if you will review the process, and examine this paper attentively, you will find there precisely the contrary of all you have advanced.” “Willingly,” replied Alphonso, without hesitating, “the decision depends on this question—whether the fief were granted under the law of Lombardy, or under the French law.” The paper being examined, it was found that the Grand Duke’s advocate was in the right. “Yes,” said Alphonso, holding the paper in his hand, “I am wrong, I have been mistaken.” A discovery so unexpected, and the fear of being accused of unfair dealing, filled him with consternation, and covered him with confusion, so much so, that every one saw his emotion. It was in vain that the President Caravita, who loved him, and knew his integrity, tried to console him, by telling him that such mistakes were not uncommon, even among the first men at the bar. Alphonso would listen to nothing, but, overwhelmed with confusion, his head sunk on his breast, he said to himself, “World, I know you now ; courts of law, never shall you see me again.” And turning his back on the assembly, he withdrew to his own house, incessantly repeating to himself, “World, I know you now.” What annoyed him most was, that having studied and re-studied the process during a whole month, without having discovered this important flaw, he could not understand how it had escaped his observation.

lie entered the house unconscious of the way

ho had come, ascended to his chamber and shut the door. His father was absent, and his mother did not notice his distress. When the dinner hour came, they called him in vain ; they knocked at his door, lie said ho would cat nothing ; they insisted, but he would not reply. Tho hour of supper passed in the same manner. This was something so now that all tho household were alarmed; neither his mother nor any one else could imagine the cause, and their uneasiness was excessive. Next day when D. Joseph returned, his wife recounted to him her vexation ; he immediately went to his son's room, but was refused admittance ; his mother wept, and his father was not less annoyed, but vexed by his obstinacy he began to get angry. It λvas not until the third day that, overcome by his mother's tears, ho consented to open his door. They pressed him to cat, and with difficulty persuaded him to take a slice of melon, which ho afterwards declared seemed to him more bitter than gall.

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After this tempest, tho Divine Light began to dawn on his soul ; he looked at tho world with the eyes of faith, and seeing its vanity, determined to break with it for over. He surrendered himself to the impulse of grace, but not unreservedly, and God (who possessed part of his heart) delayed to a future day taking complete possession.

CHAPTER VII.

God, in the accomplishment of His designs on the hearts of His elect, usually leads them gently towards the desired end ; but it was not thus with Alphonso ; the Almighty would master him by means trying to human nature. When rest had calmed his spirit, and when he had reconciled himself to God by repenting the transport of grief and indignation in which he had indulged, he took leave of his clients, renounced his intimacies, and lived in the house of his father the life of a hermit. Grace daily gained more empire over his soul, and his greatest pleasure was to spend his days partly in the church and partly in the Hospital of Incurables, or if he did remain at home, it was to meditate on the Lives of the Saints, and converse with God in reading books of devotion. These occupations daily gave a new charm to his soul ; but it was, above all, in the presence of his Divine Saviour, in the church where they made the forty-hours' adoration, that he enjoyed a foretaste of Paradise ; and often he was so absorbed, as to be unconscious of all around. He thus drew on himself the observation of those who were present, particularly certain priests, who, like himself, had a great devotion towards the Blessed Sacrament.

This behaviour of Alphonso, so conformable to the designs of Providence, was for D. Joseph,

a subject of the greatest affliction ; he imagined his son was out of his mind and had become good for nothing. “What project can he be meditating?” said he to his mother; and D. Anna, sharing his uneasiness, could throw no light on the subject. They suspected something ; they guessed his designs, but knew not how to put a stop to them. D. Joseph had the happiness of his son sincerely at heart ; nevertheless, he deviated from his duty in regard of him. Such is the effect of passion, even in the well-intentioned, when they do not timely submit themselves to reason. The Lord, who destined Alphonso to become a corner-stone in His church, would polish and prepare him by blows of the hammer, to render him more agreeable in His eyes. The father and the son were both to suffer, although their views were very different from each other.

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A few days after the events we have related, D. Joseph brought to his son a process, which interested the family, desiring him to examine it the next day. “Give it to some other person,” replied Alphonso ; “the tribunal is no longer a place for me ; henceforward I will occupy myself only with the salvation of my soul.” This reply, which D. Joseph hardly expected, although he had some presentiment of the truth, fell on him like a thunder-bolt, and he burst into tears. He could not bear to contemplate a resolution which he believed would give a mortal blow to the glory of his house. His wife tried to console him, and to persuade him that after

tho crisis was past their son would return to his formor occupations ; but he would not believe it; “No,” ho said, “Alphonso is too obstinate, he will not change his resolution.” Yet ho continued balancing between hope and fear ; while Alphonso, looking only upon God and his own soul, persisted in his determination, caring nothing for tho temporal interests either of himself or his family.

But God, who wished to withdraw him entirely from tho world, and take complete possession of his heart, prepared another trial for him. It was on tho 28th day of August, a day ever memorable in the annals of Alphonso, that the birth-day of the Empress Isabella, the wife of Charles VI., was celebrated. Thoro was a grand fetó at tho Court, and D. Joseph would assist at the ceremony of kissing hands, and ordered his son to prepare to accompany him. Ho coldly excused himself, but his father continuing to insist, ho abruptly replied, “What would yon have me do there—all that is but vanity.” Irritated by this answer, D. Joseph said in a transport of rage, “Do what you will, and go where you will !” Alphonso, seeing his refusal had provoked his father, felt some scruple, and replied, “Do not be annoyed, my father, I am ready to go with you.” D. Joseph, however, was too angry to liston to him, and only continued to repeat, “Go where you will—do what you will!” and turning his back left tho room, and stepping into his carriage drove straight to his country-house overwhelmed with chagrin. Alphonso,

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overcome with distress at witnessing the vexation of his father, exclaimed, “My God, if I resist I do wrong, and if I consent I do worse; I know not how to act!” In great affliction he left the house, and went straight to the Hospital of the Incurables, in the hope of finding some consolation. He sought a solace for his anguish, and in beholding the miseries of others he learned to support his own. He saw this world in its true light, a place of probation and suffering, and not of enjoyment and repose. He saw it as it is, a battlefield, where the Christian must fight, to gain the victory and the crown. Almost overpowered with his own sorrows, he was striving to assuage the miseries of others, of the poor and needy, when in a moment a light shone around him, the building in which he was standing seemed to be overthrown, and he heard a loud voice saying to him, “Forsake

Awed and astonished by what had occurred, he nevertheless continued assisting the sick; but when he was about to leave the Hospital, and had reached the staircase, the house again seemed falling around him, and he heard the same voice, not the less powerful that it was interfor, saying, “Forsake the world and give thyself entirely to Me.” He stood still, and then, like another St. Paul, gave himself up to the Divine Call. Weeping, he exclaimed, “Lord, I have too long resisted Thy grace; here I am, do with me what Thou pleasest.” Confounded and overpowered, he quitted the Hospital, and

proceeded straight to the church of the Redemption of Captives, dedicated to the blessed Virgin, a favourite resort of his, because of a magnificent statue of the Virgin which was there. He cast himself at the foot of the altar, imploring the assistance of his Divine Mother—and who ever implored her assistance in vain ? Strengthened by her aid, he renounced the world, he renounced his birthright, he gave himself a perfect sacrifice to his Saviour and his Divine Mother, vowing to enter into the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. While his lips pronounced the vow, his heart confirmed it, and his hand sealed it. Drawing his sword from its scabbard, he laid it on the altar of our Lady of Mercy, as a pledge of his fidelity ; and from henceforth this memorable day was ever present to his mind ; he never ceased to call it the day of his conversion, nor ever visited Naples without going to this church to return thanks to his Divine Benefactress.

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CHAPTER VIII.

On the evening of this memorable day, Alphonso went to his confessor, Father Thos. Paganò, and confided to him what had happened, declaring his resolution immediately to join the Fathers of the Oratory. “This is not a thing to be decided hastily,” said his reverend director ; “I must think it over during a year before

I give you a reply.” “ A year ! ” cried Alphonso ; “ I will not wait another day.” Pleased with his fervour, Pagano arranged with him that they both should recommend the important affairs to Jesus and Mary. The young man returned to his father’s house in body, but his heart and soul were in the house of the Oratory.

For three days after these remarkable events he tasted no food ; he would do penance for not having sooner obeyed the call of grace : but if his body languished for lack of sustenance, his soul was filled to overflowing with the manna of heaven. He excused himself from eating under various pretences, and was not at first observed ;

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much provoked at the thought of his son's splendid talents being lost in inaction, at what he considered the inutility of his present mode of life, could not refrain from saying to him in the bitterness of his heart, "Would to God that I were removed from this world, or that you were withdrawn from it; for I have no longer the courage to look at you!" The expression of such feelings quickened the resolution of Alphonso. He said he to himself, "an object of such horror to my father! then God is my only Friend; from henceforth I must be satisfied with Him alone." He then renewed his vows, offering himself without reserve as a living sacrifice to the Lord. He had not yet declared his intentions, but summoning up courage he said to him soon after, "My father, I see how much you grieve on my account, and yet I must assure you I am no longer for the world. Inspired by God, I have formed the resolution of entering the Congregation of the Fathers of the Oratory; I beseech you not to be offended, but to give me your benediction." At these words his father stood motionless with consternation, and then bursting into groans and lamentations, he withdrew to his chamber plunged in profound grief.

The devil, finding himself vanquished by the resistance of Alphonso to the storm, determined to undermine his resolution by the more dangerous temptations of the heart; and from this time his father employed the most tender entreaties, the tears and mediation of friends.

He engaged on his side Father do Miro, who supposing Alphonso was merely influenced by a melancholy humour, strove to make him change his purpose, urging on him the propriety of employing his talents for the honour of his family, of considering the interest they possessed with the Austrian court, and the brilliant prospects of his brothers, which would be so entirely overcast if he persisted in his present plan ; the Father finished by affirming it was no divine inspiration which guided him, but an illusion of the devil. In spite of all these attacks he remained firm, and when de Miro persisted, he replied, “Rev. Sir, be assured, I am convinced God calls me out of the world. He wishes me to embrace the ecclesiastic state ; I ought, and I will respond to the call of God, and not to the wishes of my father.” I). Joseph then employed other friends to intercede with him, but without success, his constant reply being, “God has called me, I cannot resist Him.” So persuaded was he of his vocation, that his uncle Mgr. Cavalieri being then in Naples, he applied to him for protection and support. When his parents endeavoured to engage this learned prelate on their side of the question, he replied, “Have not I renounced the world and my right of primogeniture to secure my salvation ; how then could I advise your son and my nephew to do the contrary, without risking his salvation and my own ?”

In the midst of these trials Alphonso had many defenders of his cause : his uncle, the

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Bishop, another uncle, the Canon Peter Gizzio, and several ecclesiastics, who succeeded at length in obtaining a reluctant consent from his father that he should enter the Congregation of the Oratory. After this forced acquiescence, he could not avoid presenting his son to the Archbishop of Naples, Cardinal Pignatelli : his Eminence was struck by the resolution of Alphonso : “What,” said he, “is it your son who wishes to become a priest?” “It has pleased God it should be so,” replied his father, while the tears stood in his eyes ; “it is but too true he has taken this resolution.” Even after this decisive step he continued to throw difficulties in the way. He would not supply him with money to furnish his ecclesiastical dress : Alphonso however found means to get what was necessary, and suddenly appeared one day clad in ecclesiastical costume. At this sight D. Joseph uttered a piercing cry, and threw himself on his bed overcome with grief. For a whole year after this occurrence he never once spoke to his son.

CHAPTER IX.

If the heart of his father repudiated his son. it was not thus with his mother. She recognized the will of God, and in recognizing she cheerfully submitted to it, doing all in her power to soften the feelings of her husband, and justify the conduct her son had pursued. The world

in general condemned him ; for when lias it acted otherwise than as our Saviour foretold ? Tho lawyers and senators who were formerly his friends, now accused him of egregious folly ; the President de Maio in particular passed him as a person unworthy of notice, but a day came when this man judged differently. On his death-bed, that awful moment when we begin to see the world in the light of God's countenance, Alphonso went to visit him, and when ho entered, tho President exclaimed, “ O Alphonso, you have found happiness in tho part

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edified by his devotion when he saw him prostrated for hours before the Blessed Sacrament, but without knowing him. At length he saw him dressed as an ecclesiastic, and soon discovered who he was. He wished to make his acquaintance, but was restrained by a feeling of human respect. One day however on leaving the Church, seeing him joined by an intimate friend, the Rev. John Mazzini, he felt such an ardent desire to share his friendship, that he could no longer restrain himself, and darting suddenly forward exclaimed, “And I also, I wish to belong to you !” He then embraced and congratulated him, foretelling the blessings Heaven had in store for him, and desiring from henceforth to be his friend and companion ; from that moment they seemed to have but one heart and one soul, every day they met together before the Blessed Sacrament, and mutually excited each other to advance in the path of perfection.

After Cardinal Pignatelli had given Alphonso the ecclesiastical habit, he attached him to the parish of St. Angelo. He immediately went to offer his services to the curate of the church, and every day afterwards he might be seen serving at mass, and on feast days assisting at every ceremony. This was to him a foretaste of Paradise. His devotion and modesty at length turned the tide of public opinion, and those who had proclaimed him a fool, now spoke loudly in praise of his generosity in sacrificing such brilliant prospects for the love of God.

But that which excited the greatest admira-

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tion, was to see him on the Sundays perambulating the parish, singing hymns, and carrying the crucifix, to assemble the children together, and lead them to the church to be catechised; nothing contrasted so strongly with the remembrance of the advocate who so lately had electrified the tribunals by his eloquence. Above all, he was most indefatigable in instructing and preparing them for their first communion, to dispose them to receive with benefit the Bread of Angels. If he had been a model of Christian virtue in the world, he was no less a model of ecclesiastical virtue in the church. The glory of God, the salvation of souls, his own salvation; these were the motives which actuated him, without any mixture of ambition or human interest. But virtue only is not sufficient for a minister of the gospel, he must also have learning; he therefore applied himself with ardour to the studies befitting his new position; and if in his worldly career he frequented the houses of the most eminent men of the law to gain knowledge in his profession, he now frequented the company of the most learned ecclesiastics, receiving daily lessons from I). Julius Torni, one of the most learned theological professors, who was afterwards elevated to the episcopacy. The elegant accomplishments of which he was already master, he would also consecrate to the glory of God: his musical and poetical talents he employed in composing sacred pieces for the use of the people, and soon

had the satisfaction of seeing them replacing dangerous and loose songs.

From the time he assumed the clerical costume, his mode of living became stricter than ever. Prayer and study occupied him alternately; he mortified his senses, refusing them every species of indulgence. In accordance with the practice of St. Paul, he mortified his body, keeping it under subjection; fasting, discipline, hair-shirts, all kinds of penitential exercises he practised, in order to follow more closely the steps of his Divine Master, His abstinence and simplicity were remarkable; every Saturday he fasted on bread and water in honour of the Blessed Virgin; his clothes were as plain as possible; for some little time to please his father, he allowed himself to be followed by a footman, but soon disengaged himself of this encumbrance, and perambulated the streets of Naples alone, like the poorest of the priesthood. And thus bidding adieu to the vanities of time, and enriching his soul with treasures for eternity, he became the edification of the whole city.

CHAPTER X.

A year after Alphonso had assumed the ecclesiastical habit, he received the tonsure from the hands of Mgr. Mirabelle, Archbishop of Nazareth, on the 23rd of December, 1724. On

tho 23rd of September following, ho was promoted to minor orders, with a dispensation from Cardinal Pignatelli, and in December succeeding was mado sub-deacon by Mgr. Javitti, Bishop of Satriano. Ho then entered as novice in tho Congregation of tho Missions, which counted among its members tho olito of tho clergy, and clerical nobility. Ho was not a person to perform superficially tho duties of his state; ho applied himself with remarkable diligence to tho observance of all tho rules and practices of piety it prescribed; he accompanied tho missionaries into the country, catechising tho children ; and such was tho effect even of the small part ho took in the missions, that all eyes were turned on him alono, and at tho moment of departure, it was he whom all regretted. But ho did not confine his assistance to this Congregation ; he frequented the house of tho Fathers of St. Vincent of Paul; ho associated himself to a congregation called the Congregation of White Monks, proving his zeal in endeavouring to procure the aids of religion for condemned criminals.

As we have formerly given the rules he laid down for himself as a lawyer, it is fitting wo should give here the rules which guided him as a candidate for the priesthood.

1. The clerk, in order to sanctify himself, ought to frequent the society of holy priests, to bo edified by their good example.

2. He ought to spend at least ono hour daily in mental prayer, in order to live in fervour and recollection.

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3. He ought to visit frequently the holy Sacrament, particularly where it is solemnly exposed.

4. He ought to read the Lives of holy priests, to furnish him with rules for his conduct, and excite him to imitate them.

5. He ought to honour the most holy Virgin Mary, the Mother and Queen of the Church, and consecrate himself particularly to her service.

6. He ought to take the greatest care of his reputation in all things, sustaining the honour of the ecclesiastical state.

7. He ought to fly worldly conversation, to avoid familiarity with laymen, and particularly with females.

8. He ought to be obedient to his superiors, fulfilling their commands, because it is the will of God.

9. He ought to wear the cassock and the tonsure, to be modest without affectation, fastidiousness, or severity.

10. He ought to be quiet and gentle in the house, exemplary in the class, and edifying in the church, particularly during divine service.

11. He ought to confess every eight days, and communicate still oftener.

12. In short, he ought to have negative sanctity, that is to say, to live free from sin, and he ought to have positive sanctity, namely, to practise every virtue.

Edified by his sanctity, the Cardinal Archbishop, by dispensation, gave him deacon's orders

on the 6th of April, 1726 ; and satisfied with his zeal and talents, gave him permission to preach in all the churches of Naples.

It was in the church of St. John at the Latin Gate that he preached his first sermon from these words of Isaiah; *UO that Thou wouldst bend the heavens and come down.....the waters would burn with fire.*" (Isaiah. 1, 2.) And the fire of his eloquence was directed to show the amazing love of Jesus Christ towards us, and our monstrous ingratitude towards God. Such was the effect of this sermon, that invitations to preach poured in upon him from all quarters ; his usual subject was the dogma of the Eucharist, and it rarely happened that he did not preach in the church where the Blessed Sacrament was solemnly exposed. He taught so forcibly the enormity of sin, and the injury it does to God, that he electrified his audience, and drew such crowds to hear him that other churches were deserted. Although he was only in deacon's orders, the Fathers of the Mission sent him into different parts of the kingdom, where he attacked vice with such eloquence that he did much to promote the glory of God in the salvation of souls.

The vexation of D. Joseph because of his son's forsaking the law, was much increased by his fear that his multiplied fatigues and austerities would shorten his days. His mother shared this anxiety, although she rejoiced in the life he had embraced ; nor were their fears vain : overcome by constant exertion, his body sunk under

it, and ho bocamo so ill that the physicians lost hope, and ono night sent in haste for some one to administer tho last Sacraments. In this extremity ho placed all his confidence in the Blessed Virgin, and eagerly asked them to bring tho largo statue of our Lady of Mercy, from the church where, at the foot of this statue, ho had renounced the world and consecrated himself to God. They brought the miraculous image without delay, and placed it before his bed : his prayers were heard ; our Mother is so ready to hear ! Ho immediately felt himself better, and was pronounced out of danger.

On the 21st of December in the same year, ho was elevated to the priesthood, and if he before burned with zeal to promote the glory of God, from henceforth this fire seemed to consume him ; descending from the altar he might be seen rushing like a lion on his prey, to attack tho strongholds of Satan. Tho Cardinal, struck by tho prodigies of grace which ho operated, appointed him to give spiritual exercises to the clergy of Naples. Some one in authority severely criticised tho Cardinal for this, saying, “ There arc people who Avould build in any case, without troubling themselves to inquiero whether or not there bo cement to build with ; ” but his Eminence had good reason to congratulate himself on his choice, because of tho numbers who attended, and the benediction poured out on his labours, so that all Naples spoke of tho virtues of Alphonso, and tho apostolical spirit which animated him.

CHAPTER XL

The labours of Alphonso as a priest were, if possible, greater than while he was only deacon. Everywhere he was sought after, curates desired him to preach in their churches, congregations besought him to give spiritual exercises, and many monasteries desired with avidity to participate in the fruits of his powerful eloquence. Animated only by the Spirit of God, he preached Christ crucified, and far from studying fine phrases and eloquent expressions, he avoided with the utmost care the vain ostentation of a superfluous erudition. To a style simple and popular, he knew how to add all that was solid and energetic; besides, every thing concurred to give effect to his mission: his noble birth, his rare talents, and supernatural gifts confounded the proud. What rendered his eloquence most persuasive was his modesty, his recollection, his profound humility, and contempt for the world. His sermons had nothing of a florid or pompous style, he sought only to make himself well understood by the people, and yet they were attended by the highest, the noblest, the most learned and talented of the city of Naples, who might be seen leaving the church where he had preached, with their heads bowed down on their breasts, showing every mark of compunction. Nicolas Capasso, a man celebrated for his learning and

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talent for satire, used to attend these sermons; on one occasion Alphonso met him, and said laughing, "I see you always at my sermons, you are probably about to publish some satire against me." "No," replied the other, "when I go to hear you preach, I listen with pleasure, because I see that you forget yourself in order to preach Christ crucified." How powerful is the gospel in the mouth of a man who announces it in all its purity!

His time was fully occupied either in the city of Naples or the adjoining districts, where he was frequently sent on mission with the Fathers of the Congregation, and he was never known to excuse himself from want of time, or negligently to fulfil any duty to which he was appointed. The Congregation enjoyed a benefice attached to a chapel, for which the testator had made it a rule, that it should be served by a single individual, and that the person appointed should be the most indefatigable of all the Instituto; and although Alphonso was the last who had been admitted, he was chosen by universal consent to undertake the charge. It was about this time, that while giving spiritual exercises to an immenso crowd assembled in the Church of the Holy Spirit, his father happened to pass as he was returning from the royal palaeo; hearing the voice of his son, an irresistible feeling of curiosity constrained him to enter and listen; before long he was moved to tears, and touched to the heart at the recollection of his violent and

harsh conduct towards him ; full of such thoughts he returned home, and scarcely had Alphonso entered the house, when he ran to his room, and embracing him tenderly, said, “O my son, what do I not owe you ; it is you who have to-day taught me to know God ! I bless you—I bless you a thousand times for having embraced a state so holy and so agreeable to God!”

Notwithstanding his incessant labour to promote the salvation of others, he did not neglect his own ; every day he consecrated some hours to meditation, without including the time spent in reading the Lives of the Saints, which he used to call the Gospel in practice. Every morning he said mass with so much devotion that it occupied a considerable time, besides long preparation, and returning thanks afterwards. Not a day passed without his visiting Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, in the church where the “Quarante ore,” or forty-hours’ adoration was made. And these visits were not short ones, as they too frequently are with others, but sometimes for hours he might be seen contemplating with love unutterable his Divine Redeemer ; never forgetting the “Quiescite pusillum,” the repose which Jesus Christ recommended to His apostles, he from time to time suspended his apostolic labours to “enter into his chamber, shut the door, and commune with his God.”

He had, as we have already seen, contracted an intimacy with several priests whose views

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and feelings were in accordance with his own : Don Joseph Porpora, Jean Mazzini, Michel de Alteriis, and Janvier Sarnelli, son of the baron of Ciorani, and others. In order to tighten the bonds of charity more and more, one of them, Don de Alteriis, hired a country-house, removed from the tumult of the city, where they arranged an Oratory, in which was placed a beautiful statue of the Virgin. Once a month they retired thither to spend three or four days in penitential exercises. Their repasts were simple, and a little statue of the Infant Jesus was placed as if presiding at the table, to Whom each one made an offering of part of the food he was eating. Father Mazzini (afterwards a Rcdemptorist), who was present, has said that these repasts were more spiritual than temporal, so abundant were the ejaculatory prayers, Their recreation was singing hymns, before they again resumed their holy meditations.

They afterwards occupied a house still more retired and solitary, where they employed themselves with unceasing satisfaction in the care of their souls, and here Alphonso almost unconsciously conceived the plan of the Institution, which in after years he gave to the Church.

CHAPTER XII.

Alphonso had been one year a priest, when he received from Cardinal Pignatelli faculties for hearing confessions, a moment ardently desired

by thousands who wished to place themselves under his direction. No sooner was he seated in the confessional than he saw himself surrounded by persons of every rank and condition : he received all with unexampled charity ; he was the first to take his place in the confessional, and the last to leave it.

It was his invariable opinion that the office of confessor was more profitable to souls in general, and less apt to produce vain glory in the priest, than any other priestly duty. For by confession, more than by any other means, sinners are immediately reconciled in God, and the grace of Jesus Christ applied to them superabundantly. He did not receive his penitents with a supercilious and repulsive air, as some do, sending them away with disdain, as if they were unworthy or incapable of receiving Divine mercy. Severe towards himself only, he treated the greatest sinners with inexpressible meekness, and without excusing the sin, was full of compassion for the sinner, when sincerely repenting he wished to make his peace with God. In his sermons also, he never separated the Justice of God from His Mercy, that he might lead souls to penitence, never forgetting that if he were the judge of the souls he directed, he was also their father.

He condemned the rigour, so contrary to the gospel, which animated some ecclesiastics, who acted in a spirit opposed to Christian charity. It was his opinion, that the more a soul was sunk in vice, the more compassionate the manner of the confessor ought to be, in order to drag it

from the fangs of Satan, and throw it into the arms of Jesus Christ. In his old age he said, that he never remembered having sent away a single sinner without having succeeded in reconciling him to God, much less of ever having treated any one with harshness and rigour. He received all sinners with kindness, instilling into them a great confidence in the blood of Christ shed for them, and pointing out to them the way of withdrawing from their sins, tho sinner is repulsed," he used to say, "he will never resolve to abandon his sin." He was always most careful to prevent the sinner perceiving that he despaired of him, and he knew so well how to gain all hearts, that he drew them to Jesus Christ, almost in spite of themselves.

He was still more indulgent in the imposition of Sacramental penance. "Let us give to penitents," said he, "tho penance they will perform willingly ; but let us beware of loading them with obligations they would accept -with repugnance, or abandon voluntarily. The penance ought to be such as will inspire horror for the sin, but not for the penance." Thus he frequently enjoined the penance of returning to confess, of frequenting the Sacraments, of hearing mass daily, of meditating on the Passion of Christ, or some eternal truth. For this purpose he composed a small collection of meditations, and gave them often to his penitents. He also imposed as penances of obligation to visit daily the Blessed Sacrament, or some image of the Virgin Mary,

to recite the Rosary in her honour, and he persuaded the heads of houses to recite it regularly with their family. As to fasting, discipline, and penances of this kind, he might counsel such occasionally, but never commanded them. “If the penitent be contrite,” he said, “he will do these things of himself, otherwise, he will leave the penance, and relapse into sin, if it be made obligatory.” This conduct, full of wisdom and gentleness, had the desired effect. He daily gained a multitude of criminals who had long lived in disorder and sin. He often went to preach in the market-places and at the Lavinaro, where the dregs of the people are to be found. He delighted in seeing himself sur-

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scholars corrupted their will. Fortunately for him he attended a sermon preached by Alphonso, which moved him to contrition ; entering into himself, and full of repentance, he threw himself at his feet. Received with charity, he attached himself to the service of God, forsook sin, and embraced a life of penitence. Formerly he had taught his pupils to do evil ; but now, regenerated by grace, all his endeavours were directed to fill them with the Spirit of God, and inspire them with the greatest horror of sin. He met his scholars at an early hour every morning, and conducted them to church to hear mass, after which he made them meditate on some eternal truth, taking occasion to suggest to them holy resolutions, and finished by reciting acts of faith, hope, and charity. Again in the evening he took the children to visit the Holy Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin, choosing the least frequented churches to avoid all display, being penetrated with repentance and humility for the scandal he had formerly given, he would also that his scholars should go weekly to confession, and prepared the elder ones for making their first communion. He was careful in instructing them to make acts of faith previously, and thanksgivings afterwards, and began a practice still in use in Naples, of the more advanced instructing and attending to the others on such occasions.

The other remarkable conversion was that of Lucas Nardone ; this man had led an irregular life as a soldier, having often deserted, and at length

was about to be condemned to die, when some one obtained his pardon. He was however chased from the army with infamy, and lived covered with shame and loaded with sin. It happened one day that he heard Alphonso preach, and touched by grace he sought an audience, hardly daring to hope his crimes could be forgiven. He was received with open arms, encouraged, consoled, and led to the right way, and soon this man, once condemned to death, despised and abandoned for his wickedness, became a furnace of Divine love, gaining many souls to Christ by dragging them from the toils of Satan.

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Alphonso needed not to seek for studied phrases in order to dispose sinners to repentance ; his simplest words had an unction in them which powerfully moved all hearts ; a remarkable instance of this occurred in the case of a gentleman who went to him for confession, and detailed the greatest crimes with the utmost apparent indifference. When he had finished, Alphonso asked if he had nothing more to say. “Nothing but what I have already said,” he coldly replied. “What!” answered the confessor, “and that is all ; now do you not see that the only thing wanting to complete your career, is to put on the turban and become Turk ; what more could you have done than the crimes you have just confessed ? Tell me now, my child, what evil has Jesus Christ done to you ?” These words pronounced with the force of ardent zeal went directly to his heart. “Have I then,”

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said he to himself, “ committed such sins that I cannot commit greater ? ” and penetrated with the deepest contrition he bewailed his past disorders, placed himself in the hands of Alphonso, and was directed by him during his whole life, which was ever afterwards most exemplary and devout.

The means he employed to lead his penitents to perfection, may be reduced to two, meditation or prayer, and mortification. He proposed meditation as the mirror in which each one must see his deformities, and mortification as a knife with which to prune and cut off all the excrescences of nature. He affirmed there could be no true prayer without mortification, and to practise mortification the spirit of prayer was indispensable. After the penitent had discovered by meditation the stains that sullied the soul, he prescribed prayer, saying, “ he who prays will certainly be saved, and he who neglects prayer will as certainly be damned.” “ Those who are saved, are saved by prayer, and those who are damned, are lost because they would not pray.”

But above all remedies, he prescribed frequent communion, and daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament. In his little work of “ Visits to the Blessed Sacrament,” he acknowledges that all the graces he received while living in the world, flowed from this source. “ O what exquisite happiness,” he exclaims, “ to bend before the altar and converse familiarly with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, asking pardon

for the faults we have committed, exposing our necessities as a friend does to a friend, and asking His love with its abundant graces” AVliile ho was in Naples, he always advised his penitents to pay their court to Jesus in the church where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed during the forty-hours' adoration. Ho might be seen there himself almost ravished in ecstasy before his adorable Redeemer, while around him knelt a circle of his penitents.

He exacted besides a filial confidence in the Divine Mother Mary. “As,” said ho, “all good comes to us from the celestial Father, through the mediation of Jesus Christ; so all good comes to us from Jesus Christ, through the medium of Mary.” Ho would that all should daily recite the Rosary in her honour, visit some church where her image was placed, and have a picturo of her at the head of their bed. lie exacted of all his penitents to communicate at each of her feasts, and was careful to propose some devotional practice for each of her Novenas, that by good dispositions they might be prepared to receive her favours ; ho practised himself and recommended to others to fast every Saturday in her honour, and on the eves of all her feasts.

Although he preferred to devote himself to the service of the poor, and the lower class of people, ho did not refuse to direct those of higher rank, considering the great influence they possessed over others, for evil or for good. Around his confessional might be seen persons

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of all conditions, and though they knew lie received all equally, the highest did not disdain to await his turn with the very lowest, submitting willingly to any inconvenience, rather than not have him for their director. In after times he was not less interested in directing holy women who had consecrated themselves to God. In Naples there was scarcely to be found any convent of nuns not under his direction, and many of these died in the odour of sanctity. In every field of the church he cultivated flowers to adorn the celestial Paradise, which produced fruit for the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was not to be supposed that the powers of hell would look calmly on while Alphonso wielded the spear of his patron, the Archangel Michael with such wonderful effect. Crowds came from every quarter to obtain the benefit of his direction, and not having time to give many fervent souls the instructions he judged necessary, to advance them in the way of perfection, he thought of assembling them for instruction in some solitary place during the summer evenings, and he first chose a spot near the convent of the Bare-footed Carmelites, afterwards beyond the convent of St. Angelo, and at last fixed on a site before the Church of the Star, which belongs to the Minims, as being

least frequented. The assembly consisted not of the noble, but of the poor, who came from different quarters of the city, some a considerable distance. Lazzaroni, scavengers, masons, barbers, carpenters, and other artisans were there, and the lower their condition, the more friendly was their reception. Other priests took part in the good work, among whom were D. D. Porpora, do Alteriis, Mazzini, Sarnelli, &c. In this assembly, composed of persons low in the eyes of the world, but great in the sight of God, Alphonso daily preached the truths of religion, showing them the horrible nature of vice, and the sublime beauty of Christian virtue. The other priests, his companions, spoke alternately to the people, pointing out to them the different degrees of love to God, and love towards our neighbour, showing them the necessity of self-denial, if they would advance in perfection, and the misery produced by unrepressed passion. At other times they would talk of mortifying the flesh, and imitating Christ crucified, proposing to their example the life of some Saint, and thus exciting them to virtue.

There were some individuals residing in the neighbourhood to whom these meetings seemed not a little strange, and because they were new they took it for granted they must be evil. In the hope of confirming their suspicions, they concealed themselves behind their windows to hear what was going on. Now some of those poor people were so anxious to do penance that they fasted rigorously, and one evening a poor arti-

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san was pointed out to Alphonso, who eat nothing but raw vegetables and roots, though obliged to work hard to support his family. He began to reprove him for this excess, when D. Joseph Porpora took up the word and said, "God wills that we should eat in order to live," and added laughing "if any one gives you four cutlets, you will do well to take advantage of it." The multitude were amused at this and began to laugh, each one passing the joke to his neighbour. The listeners, hearing the words, "*cutlets, eating*" took advantage of it, put an evil interpretation on the words, and thought the people were an assemblage of libertines ; and going still further, came to the conclusion that they must be a club of Molinists, and a band of heretics.

Coolly taking all their conjectures for facts, they reported the matter to Cardinal Pignatelli. As the accusation referred to a nocturnal assembly, and the circumstances seemed equivocal, his Eminence at first supposed they must be dissolute evil-disposed persons, and he was confirmed in this opinion in consequence of several small bands of Lutheran soldiers having formed themselves in different parts of the town, some of whom had already been seized. Information was conveyed to the Governor of Naples, who immediately ordered a captain of the guard to disguise himself and go to one of the meetings. They were then in the middle of the Novena of the Nativity of our Lady, and Alphonso in proposing some pious practices in honour of the

infant Mary, made use of certain expressions which seemed mysterious and suspicious to the captain, and as he could not catch the meaning of the words, he reported to the governor that he had heard a melange of things good and bad, which he could not exactly comprehend. In consequence the governor and the cardinal were persuaded it could be nothing good, and ordered both priests and laymen to be arrested. Next morning Alphonso happening to be at the palace of the Cardinal, heard of the affair and the proposed arrest, and not doubting it was his own meeting, he hastened to warn his penitents not to assemble at the usual place. It was impossible, however, to warn every one, and those who lived at a distance came as usual, among whom were the two formerly mentioned, Peter Barbicresio and Lucas Nardone. The poor people had scarcely arrived when they were surrounded by archers and sergeants, and carried off to the guard-house, from whence these two prisoners escorted each by an archer and a sergeant were conducted before the procurator of the court. The good penitents took the matter calmly : “ Comrade,” said Nardone to the other, “ this picco of politeness is perhaps not much to your taste.” “ On the contrary,” replied Barberese ; “ I am well satisfied ; Jesus Christ was bound with ropes, and we are treated much more civilly, only a simple cord on the arm.” The Procurator having ordered them to declare what they did at the place of the Star, they replied that

they were poor ignorant people, who came to receive instruction from D. Alphonso de Liguori and other priests on the subject of religion. When tho Procurator hoard the name of Liguori, ho exclaimed, "God forgive you, you have alarmed tho two courts, the ecclesiastical and civil!" They were then conducted to the house of tho governor, where the mention of the name of Liguori was at once sufficient to establish their innocence. Tho magistrate took pleasure in questioning them about the pious practices which they wore taught, when all of a sudden they heard tho noise of bells announcing that tho holy Asiaticum was carrying through the street; in a moment the two turned their backs on tho governor and ran to prostrate themselves at the balcony, crying out, "It is our Lord, it is our Lord!" Tho governor asked no more questions, but dismissed them with tears of tenderness and consolation.

Alphonso was rather uneasy at this adventure, and when ho heard what had happened, went next day to tho Cardinal, acknowledging himself as the author of tho mischief, and alone deserving of punishment. His Eminence soon quieted him by expressing his satisfaction at the good he had done, but notwithstanding advised him to discontinue the assembly. "The times," said he, "are too critical; wo must be careful that wolves do not cover themselves with sheep's clothing to do mischief under tho shadow of your name."

The terror of a now sect which held secret

mootings was spread over all Naples, every one spoke of it, and Alphonso and his companions were constantly asked to offer their prayers to God for the conversion of these new heretics! One day Father Mazzini was saying mass at the convent of the Camaldales, when one of the fathers asked him if anything now had been discovered of that sect of heretics which had lately appeared. "What sect?" asked Mazzini. "The sect of the *Cutlets*," he replied; and the vicar added, "We have heard that certain priests meet with the people every evening, and hold a species of club in the place of the Star. They are supposed to be a sect of Molinists." Mazzini assured them they need not be uneasy, for there was no great evil to be apprehended from the new sectaries. Alphonso continued to do great good in Naples by his conferences, and many of those who attended them ever after led the lives of saints. Some entered into religion, while others remained in the world to embalm it by the odour of their virtue. Perhaps the two most remarkable were Anthony Pennini, who sold eggs through the town, and found means while pursuing his avocation to drag many souls from perdition. After his death he reappeared to several persons and converted them. The other, Leonard Cristano, went through the streets with his ass and sold chestnuts; both of them performed miracles during their lives and after their death.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE triumph of the devil seemed complete when these meetings were put down ; but here as elsewhere he found himself defeated. His machinations only produced greater glory to God by causing still more good to be done. Convinced by experience how useful these assemblages had been, Alphonso suggested to Peter Barbercso and a few others of his more fervent penitents, that they should give instructions to the lazzaroni and other people of the same class, not in the market, but in suitable places removed from public observation.

Peter thus encouraged, began to instruct the little porters or errand boys, in the shop of a barber. He exhorted them frequently to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and to have a great devotion towards the Blessed Virgin ; he also made practical meditations with thorn on the Passion of Christ. A priest who saw the good he was doing, advised him to moot his little flock in a neighbouring chapel ; he accordingly did so, and every evening about sixty young people attended, without counting those of a more advanced age.

Lucas Nardono, and several others, pursued the same course, so that in different quarters of the town the penitents of Alphonso were busy in drawing souls from destruction and winning

them to Christ, he on his part was careful to visit and superintend those meetings, animating them to pursue the great work of their salvation, and leading them to the love of the cross.

One evening the Canon Romano was taking a walk in the neighbourhood where Peter Barberese taught the most numerous of all these assemblages, when a friend met him and said, “Come with me, I wish to give you an agreeable surprise ;” he accordingly led him to where Peter was instructing his hearers. On seeing the canon, he rose, and offered him a seat, explaining to him the object of the meeting, and then at his request continued his instruction.

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Delighted with what he saw, Romano could not resist detailing the whole to Cardinal Pignatelli, who was so pleased at the good that was done, that he suggested to the canon that he should instruct the people himself. Peter willingly resigned his place, and immediately commenced assembling in another house more lazzaroni and porters. The meetings began to multiply, and at length in almost every quarter of Naples the fervent penitents of Alphonso might be found instructing and catechising the ignorant. In after times, and even when he had founded his own Congregation, he never came to Naples without visiting those favourite meetings, exhorting them to persevere in the service of God, and in gaining conquests to Christ. Above all he was consoled by the thought, that the overthrow of one good undcr-

taking had boon the very means of producing another much more extensive, and still more agreeable to God.

Tho work continued to increase, and before long these meetings, protected by the Cardinal himself, ceased to be held in shops and private houses, but were transferred to public oratories and churches. Every evening -when tho clock struck six, the well-disposed occupied themselves for an hour and a half with their devotions, and this practice is still continued. They recited tho Rosary with acts of faith, hope, and charity, after which they listened to a half hour's instruction on Christian duties, and were then taught tho manner of practising mental prayer. Every Saturday zealous priests, appointed for that purpose, heard their confessions. On the Sunday morning, after half an hour's meditation on tho Passion of Christ, mass was said, with tho exposition of tho Blessed Sacrament, followed by tho Holy Communion, a priest pronouncing tho affections and thanksgivings ; then followed several masses, and all ended with Benediction.

During tho day they went together to some church to visit tho Blessed Sacrament, and some altar of the Blessed Virgin, and when each had performed his own particular devotions, they took a walk to a retired spot in tho country, and if time permitted, met in some inclosuro quietly to amuso themselves. When evening came, they sung hymns and returned again to tho chapel for tho usual evening devotions. Each of these

societies included from a hundred to a hundred and fifty persons.

Afterwards they adopted the regulation of visiting the sick in the hospitals ; on Sunday after Vespers they went to the Hospital of the Incurables, and on Thursday to that of the Annunciation ; some made the beds, others swept the floors, or performed any office useful or necessary for the sick ; but, above all, they attended to their spiritual wants, exhorting them to patience, and preparing them to receive the sacraments by giving instructions to those who were ignorant. When the confessors found any more ignorant than the others, they pointed them out to the associates that they might take a more special care of them. After the sick had been attended to, they exposed the Blessed Sacrament at the end of the galleries, while the zealous priests spoke on the sad consequences of sin, recalling to their minds those who had died during the previous week. They afterwards carried the Blessed Sacrament through all the sick wards, giving benediction to console the sufferers. When these charitable works were ended, they went, as we have said, to recreate themselves in the country.

It was to the pious efforts of Alphonso and his penitents alone, that Naples was indebted for the establishment of Chapels, so called from the first of these meetings having been hold in the Chapel of the Bonnettieri. Latterly, in 1834, they amounted to a hundred, containing each about three hundred persons, and the good they

produced among the working classes was incalculable. Tho most zealous priests are attached to them, and the Archbishops of Naples find them invaluable. In these societies they acknowledge neither rank nor riches, tho door is open to all, and nothing delights them more than to be joined by some poor outcast who wishes to reform his life. Alphonso occupied himself also in establishing schools for women ; a well-educated lady was placed at tho head of them to direct tho others, and ho himself visited them from time to time; but this good work did not last long.

Barbereso lived to an advanced age, and so did Nardone, persevering to the end in their pious labours. Tho only time Alphonso was in Naples during his episcopate, Barbereso was present at his sermons. lie saw him at the Hospital of tho Annunciation : “ What are you doing here ? ” said Alphonso, laughing. “ Como to hear the Holy Spirit,” replied Barbereso. This worthy disciple died on Saturday, tho 19th of September, tho eve of tho Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin. Tho Jesuits buried him in tho Church of tho Little Carmel, among the members of tho Confraternity of our Lady of Sorrows. After his death his body retained such an appearance of life, that for some time they hesitated to bury him. He left behind him a great reputation for sanctity, as also did his fellow labourer, Nardone, who was buried in the Church of St. Matthew.

CHAPTER XV.

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It was against his will that Alphonso continued to live in the house of his father; he longed for a solitary cell, where, retired from the world, he could enjoy that calm and delicious peace to be found only in solitude. He experienced a foretaste of this peace in the monthly retreats he made with his companions in the country-house already mentioned, and God, who always favoured him in his holy undertakings, soon furnished him with the means. The celebrated Missionary, D. Matthew Ripa, had lately returned from China. A true model of apostolic men in this vast empire, he had become the support of religion there by the favour he enjoyed with the emperor. Being resolved to propagate, defend, and perpetuate the faith among the idolaters of China, he had brought with him a Chinese doctor and four young men full of fervour, with the intention of founding at Naples a College for the Chinese. Ripa had resolved on this, from the persuasion that because of the continual intercourse they could easily induce young Chinese to come to Naples, where, after being educated for the priesthood, they might return to their own country, and in case of persecution succour the faithful with less cause for suspicion than foreigners could do. God blessed the enterprise, and on the 14th April, 1729,

they opened the House of the Chinese Mission, not without many difficulties and labours on the part of the pious founder, but with the consent and authority of Pope Benedict XIII., and the king Charles VI.

Alphonso considering the excellence of this institution, the rare merits of its founder, and the great fervour which reigned there, with the poverty and privations which they endured for love of God, formed the resolution of joining F. Ripa, and sharing as a pensioner of the house in the fervour which animated this new-born society. Father Ripa, who was well acquainted with him, knew how to value the acquisition of a subject so worthy and so zealous. He eagerly received him, and about the middle of June, 1729, he entered the college. A resolution so unforeseen vexed his father extremely, who deeply regretted the society of one whom he considered loss as a son than as an angel sent him by God. Painful as the separation was, he had not the courage to oppose so laudable a design.

No sooner did Alphonso find himself in the college, delivered from the surveillance of his parents, than he gave himself up to the practice of mortification with more freedom and ardour than ever. He was clothed in sackcloth, and wore chains of iron; several times a-day he took the discipline until the blood flowed. The wretched food which he ate was not sufficient for his love of mortification, but he added to it bitter ingredients, such as myrrh, aloes, and

wormwood, lie ate but little of the fruits of which the others partook, and fasted every Saturday on bread and water in honour of our Lady, and generally ate in a kneeling position, or lying on the floor. But all this would not yet satisfy him ; in his chamber he would not allow himself a chair, but stood while he studied, holding his book in his hands, and keeping little stones in his shoes. Monsigneur Cappola, Bishop of Cassano, has said that his penances surpassed even those of St. Peter of Alcantara.

Besides all these voluntary penances, he never exempted himself from the privations imposed upon all the members of the community, and indeed the new-born Congregation wanted not opportunities to practise poverty. Although their rule limited them to the use of vegetables and a little boiled meat, they frequently had no meat at all, and often the scraps which appeared on their table were stale ; in such circumstances they ordinarily had a salad of mushrooms. Sometimes they could only afford to buy bones, from which they strove to extract a miserable soup. During Lent they scarcely ever had fish, a pilchard with their vegetables was a feast to them, and when they did buy fish, it was always the cheapest that could be found. They sowed radishes in a little plot of ground attached to the house, and for months they lived on these roots varied occasionally with a few pears, As for their evening repast it usually consisted of the remnants of dinner boiled with a few coarse and hard biscuits ; their bread in general was

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of the coarsest kind. And so far from ever showing the slightest repugnance to all this, Alphonso on the contrary rejoiced in it, and encouraged the others to suffer with pleasure, to love to suffer that they might become more holy and agreeable to God.

In the midst of this he continued to draw new strength from prayer, and the examples of the Saints. By reading their Lives, he taught himself in their school, and animated himself to follow their examples. He burned with an increasing desire to love God, and to give proofs of his love. Besides the meditation of the Community, he daily spent an hour and a half at least before the Blessed Sacrament in the Church where the Quarante oro was held. His mass, with its accompanying prayers and thanksgivings, occupied a long time, but all this could not satisfy his devotion. He spent whole nights in watching, sometimes in his room, sometimes in the Church before the Blessed Sacrament. And the little rest he granted to nature was given grudgingly, and not without many contrivances to render it as little agreeable as possible ; he often lay on the bare ground or on a hard table.

It might naturally be supposed that amidst these bodily austerities undertaken and endured from the pure love of God, his mind would be enjoying that interior Paradise, that foretaste of heaven, which nothing worldly can give, nor the absence of every worldly comfort diminish or take away ; but it was not thus with our Saint, he desired to carry his cross, he wished

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to drink of the chalice from which his Saviour had drunk, and therefore God permitted him to feel the nature of our Saviour's anguish when he exclaimed, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

His heart enjoyed no consolation. He was deprived of all the favours which render every trial light and easy. His days dragged along in dryness and desolation; he believed he had lost all devotion for mass, his prayer was arid; he sought God, but he found Him not. He struggled like a man rowing against a strong current. "I go to Jesus," he said, "and He repulses me. I have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, and she will not listen to me." All he did at this time was done by the mere light of faith, which made him resolute to seek to please God in all things, without being impelled either by the hope of heaven or the fear of hell.

During the time he remained in the college of the Chinese he gave the greatest proofs of his zeal to gain souls. A heart which burns with the love of God, cannot fail to be kindled with the love of its neighbour. Crowds came to the church to confess to him and hear him preach; every Friday he discoursed on the glories of Mary, and recited with the people the chaplet of her sorrows. He celebrated several novenas in the course of the year, during which he preached in honour of the Blessed Virgin, or the holy family, the titular patrons of the college. Every year he gave retreats to the great benefit of those who took part in them, and each

day during the holy exercises the church was crowded as on feast-days. Devoted to his penitents, he scarcely took time to eat ; and often before his meal was over, numbers were waiting to go to confession, even from the most remote quarters of the city. In the evenings after the exercises of the Quarante ore, he used to enter the church accompanied with a train of penitents, whose confessions he heard until late. Father Ripa, in his Memoirs of this Congregation, writes thus of Alphonso : “ We have for pensioner the noble D. Alphonso do Liguori, a priest eminent not for his birth only, but for his excellent conduct and general qualifications as a missionary. He has lived in this house as pensioner almost from its first establishment, and although not aggregated to the mission, he has nevertheless the desire, and holds himself ready to go to China to preach the Gospel, as he has more than once declared to his director. Assured of his zeal and his talents, I have given him the entire care of the Church, and in all that regards the pulpit and the confessional, he has acquitted himself to the great advantage of souls.”

Although he was bowed down with labours, he redoubled his ardour when he saw the good resulting to poor souls. It would be impossible to enumerate the number whom he reclaimed of obstinate sinners, old in crime, kindling within their obdurate hearts a tender love towards their Saviour. It has been said that he possessed a peculiar gift in the confessional for in-

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spiring his penitents with compunction, and that scarcely had they knelt at his feet when they felt their hearts touched with sorrow for their sins. From this we can understand how he was able to say at a late period of his life, that he had never sent away one penitent unabsolved, he converted a celebrated courtesan who was afterwards eminent for her sanctity, and many who had lived ordinarily good lives, became under his direction models of perfection. He also induced a number who were occupied in mere worldly pursuits, to renounce the world and consecrate themselves to God. The first sermon he preached when giving a retreat inspired fifteen young persons with the resolution of giving themselves to the service of God. He understood so well the beauty and dignity of virginity, that those who heard him speak were in spite of themselves forced to love and admire this virtue, and many instances are on record of the gay, the beautiful, and the talented renouncing the fading, the unsatisfying pleasures of the world, to devote themselves under his direction to amassing the imperishable riches of Heaven.

We will mention one instance only of a very remarkable conversion of this kind. A young lady, called Mary, was a source of great anxiety to her pious mother, as her heart and mind were filled by the world to the exclusion of everything serious. She besought Alphonso to pray for the conversion of her daughter; he did so, and the young girl seemed to be reformed,

but before long she became more giddy and thoughtless than ever. Again the poor mother had recourse to Alphonso, who at her earnest entreaty spoke seriously to the girl, representing strongly the danger of her position. It was in the church he spoke to her, and she, touched to the quick, retired to a corner and began bitterly to bewail her sins. Alphonso seeing this, before he quitted the confessional called her back : “Mary,” said he, “will you sincerely give yourself to God ? ” “ Yes,” she instantly replied. “ But without reserve, and with your whole heart ? ” he continued. “ Without the slightest reserve, with my whole heart,” said the poor girl with much energy. “ Then,” said he, “ go instantly, cut off your hair, and make yourself a Carmelite.” She obeyed, took the religious habit, persevered, and became a Saint. To produce this result, God sent her many severe and bitter trials ; for several years she was sensibly tormented by devils. After her death she was invoked by many, and worked several miracles.

At this period of his life his labours were so incessant and multifarious, that we can scarcely conceive the possibility of one individual accomplishing the half he performed. Preaching in various churches in Naples, giving retreats, hearing confessions, and going on mission to the neighbouring towns ; yet he found time for all, without encroaching either on his studies or devotions.

In the year 1729 a frightful epidemic rava-

god the city of Naples ; he profited by this occasion to sacrifice himself more and more ; and among the brothers of the Congregation of Apostolic Missions he was over the first in assisting the sick. The poor were as usual the objects of his most ardent charity. He opened a mission in the large Church of the Holy Spirit, and took advantage of the time to withdraw souls from the power of Satan. In consequence of his great fatigues, he was seized the following year with a pulmonary complaint, which brought him to the gates of death, but again his Blessed Mother performed a miracle in his favour.

On one occasion about this period, he was sitting with the other Fathers during recreation, when a tremendous thunder-storm came on, and a bolt fell in the midst of them. Father Ripa was wounded in the throat, while Alphonso and others fell down senseless ; they soon recovered, however, to thank God for their escape, and devote themselves with renewed zeal to His service. They were saved by an evident interposition of Providence.

CHAPTER XVI.

In the spring of the year 1731, the Puglia and the neighbouring provinces suffered exceedingly from an earthquake, which happened on the eve of the 19th of March, a few days before Easter. The bishops exerted themselves to obtain mission-

aries, that the opportunity might not be lost for calling the people to repentance, and the Brothers of the Propaganda were invited. On this occasion Alphonso as usual produced a miraculous effect, and many were reclaimed and converted.

The nuns of St. Clara hearing every one speak of the young missionary, entreated their superior to have him invited, were it only to preach one sermon : he came, and some of them said that in listening to him it seemed as if a seraph were speaking, and not a man, his words went so directly to the heart.

The town of Foggia had suffered from the earthquake more than any other in the Puglia, being almost reduced to a mass of ruins ; but the God who smote them would also comfort them in the midst of their affliction, by giving them a miraculous proof of His love. They venerated in this town a very old and miraculous picture of the Virgin, the colours of which being almost obliterated by age, it was glazed and covered with a curtain. The place where it was first kept being nearly destroyed, it was removed to the Church of the Capuchins, where the people, terrified by repeated shocks of an earthquake, came in crowds to place themselves under the protection of the Mother of Mercy. On the morning of the 22nd of March, while the multitude were kneeling before this picture, the Blessed Virgin showed herself to them under the appearance of a young woman, and this miraculous manifestation was repeated for several days, and seen by

crowds who came to look on the picture and venerated it. This apparition made a great noise throughout the kingdom, and when their mission was finished Alphonso and his companions went to visit the miraculous picture. The inhabitants remembering he was the nephew of their late Bishop, Mgr. Cavallicri, received him in the most honourable manner; all the gentlemen of the place paid their respects to him, and the Bishop, Mgr. Faccola, with other distinguished ecclesiastics, insisted he should give a Novena in honour of the Blessed Virgin; at first he refused, having no permission from his superiors to prolong his stay, but at length he yielded to the circumstances of the time and their urgent entreaties. To celebrate the Novena they chose the Church of St. John, and the picture was conveyed there from the Church of the Capuchins. The concourse of people was such that the greater part could not enter the church, they therefore erected a pulpit at the door, at the side of which was exposed the miraculous picture. The extraordinary effects were beyond description; great as was the number of priests, they were not sufficient to hear the confessions of crowds, who, touched to the quick by the discourses of Alphonso, turned from their wickedness and ever after walked in the way of the Lord. Almost the entire population of the town were converted, and the bishop never ceased returning thanks to God for the wonders that were then accomplished.

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About six miles from Foggia was a celebrated sanctuary, situated in a wood, and dedicated to the Virgin Mary under the title of the Virgin Crowned. They solemnized the feast every year on the last Saturday of April and during the Octavo which followed, and crowds from all the neighbouring provinces flocked thither. This great assemblage of men and women from different quarters caused many disorders, above all on the two last days of the feast, when they carried their amusements to a scandalous excess. Alphonso determined to oppose this, and knowing the people intended going there on the Sunday which ended the Novena, before giving the benediction he said, "I will bless all, with the exception of those who are going to the feast of the Virgin Crowned, This feast has caused sins without number to be committed, and far from being honourable to God, it is most insulting to Jesus Christ and His Virgin Mother." He finished by recommending them to perform this devotion at another time, and in a spirit of penitence.

There happened to him during this Novena a very remarkable event. His delight was to remain near the miraculous image, from which he could hardly drag himself away. One day when the people had withdrawn, and the image was replaced in the church, he got up on the altar to examine it more nearly; but scarcely had he placed himself in front of it, when he fell into an ecstasy, which lasted nearly an hour. The Blessed Virgin would fully satisfy his de-

votion, crowning his happiness by showing to him her face radiant with celestial beauty. When the vision disappeared, he descended from the altar inebriated with joy, entoning the “Ave Maris Stella,” in which he was joined by about thirty persons who had been witness to the occurrence. Ho afterwards attested having seen the Virgin Mother under tho appearance of a young girl of thirteen or fourteen years of ago, wearing a white veil which undulated from side to side. Tho next morning ho described his vision to a painter, detailing tho appearance as accurately as possible, and tho picturo drawn at tho time is still preserved at Ciorani.

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On quitting Foggia, desiring to render his homage to tho Archangel Michael, ho passed by Mount Gargano. At Manfredonia tho Archbishop, M. do Mario, camo to moot him with his chapter, accompanied by tho most distinguished inhabitants of tho town. They besought him to preach to the people, but he excused himself, as he had no permission from his superiors, and was by no means sure of escaping censure for having remained at Foggia. Next morning ho visited tho Altar of tho Archangel, and celebrated mass with such extraordinary devotion that all eyes were fixed upon him ; when they found out who he was, and his intention in visiting Gargano, the chapter came to wait on him, and to request ho would preach to tho people, but again he declined.

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On returning to Naples in the middle of tho month of May, he found his fears not vain.

The Canon I). Julius Torni, whether he really blamed him for making a Novena at Foggia, or whether he would only prove his humility, reprimanded him strongly in the presence of all the congregation. He did not attempt to excuse himself, he did not speak ; but on the contrary rejoiced to see himself mortified before such a respectable assembly.

CHAPTER XVII,

Exhausted and worn out by his labours in the provinces, his friends began to have serious apprehensions for his health, and accordingly it was determined he should retire to the country for a time until he recovered strength. The place fixed upon was a hermitage in the neighbourhood of Amalfi, situated on a hill near the sea. He was accompanied by Joseph Jorio, John Mazzini, Panza, and two others; and after a rough voyage they arrived safe. They immediately went to pay their respects to the archbishop, M. Scorza, and meeting the Vicar General, he strongly urged them to change their plan, and go to a convenient hermitage near Scala, where they could at the same time be useful to the poor goatherds of the neighbourhood, who were destitute of spiritual aid. “Only go,” said he, “and I will give you all the power of my jurisdiction.” The proposal was willingly

agreed to, and they soon established themselves at St. Mary of the Mount, the name of the hermitage. They had obtained permission to keep the Blessed Sacrament in the hermitage, and while Alphonso was recovering strength of body, he gained now strength to his soul in the presence of his beloved Saviour.

As soon as the arrival of the missionaries was known, the shepherds and goatherds, with the other inhabitants of the country, came to seek them, and the visits of these poor people were a subject of indescribable consolation. They began to catechise them and hear their confessions, and this sojourn in the country became an uninterrupted mission, which produced abundant fruits. It was now Alphonso became acquainted with the extreme destitution of the people scattered over the country, who often lived without the knowledge necessary for salvation; being without the Sacraments of the word of life, many had to be instructed in the first rudiments of faith before they could make their confession. The inhabitants of the town of Scala hearing what was doing in their neighbourhood by the celebrated missionary Alphonso Liguori, were very anxious to hear him preach. The bishop, equally anxious to hear more of him, sent a pressing request that he would agree to their desires. He accepted the invitation, and preached one sermon, which produced all the effect of a regular mission. It was on the Sunday following the Octavo of the Blessed Sacrament; he press-

cd upon thorn such strong motives for loving Jesus in His Sacrament, and for detesting sin, that the whole Congregation were dissolved in tears, and their sobs and groans resounded through the neighbourhood. The superior of the Convent of St. Saviour besought him to preach in their church, which he did with his usual success, and the bishop was so delighted that he engaged him for a Novena, to be celebrated in the Cathedral for the Feast of the Holy Redeemer in the month of September.

He did not however forget the good shepherds of St. Mary of the Mount; and he besought God, even with tears, to choose some one to labour with efficacy among these abandoned people, he knew not that he himself was chosen by God to be the instrument of gathering these precious souls into the fold of Christ, but before long the purposes of God were revealed to him. He continued to labour among them until September, when he returned to Scala, according to agreement, accompanied by John Mazzini. He preached the Novena in the Cathedral with his usual success, and to the nuns of St. Saviour he gave a retreat. This was the moment in which God would make known His will. There was in the convent a nun of great sanctity, possessed of supernatural gifts. She knew nothing of what was passing in his mind, but on the 13th of October she saw in a vision a new Congregation of priests who were employed in the care of thousands living in villages and scattered hamlets destitute of spiritual aid; she

saw Alphonso at the head of this Congregation, and heard a voice which said, "This is the soul I have chosen to be the instrument of My glory in this great work." A few days after, this nun, while kneeling before Alphonso in the confessional, told him of the vision she had had, and the designs God had upon him. Struck with the remarkable conformity between her vision and his own thoughts, he at first believed it to be a Divine inspiration, but afterwards fearing it was but a vain illusion, he reproved the nun, and treated her as a visionary. She humbled herself before him, but persisted, and the more he repulsed her, the more she assured him that God had chosen him to be the instrument of His mercy towards the inhabitants of the country.

On his return to the house, Father Mazzini seeing his trouble and agitation, asked the cause. He hesitated to tell him, when Father M. said, "I know you have had a dispute with one of the nuns, for I overheard you speaking loud." Yielding to his friend's desire, he told him what the nun had said; and far from treating it lightly, Mazzini did all in his power to persuade him of its truth. The sanctity of the nun was undoubted. "Besides," argued his friend, "an institution of the kind is much wanted in this kingdom, and who knows what designs God may have upon you." Grace was operating in the heart of Alphonso, but always doubting his own fitness, he could not resolve upon taking any active measures. "I approve much of such an insti-

tution," said he, "and I foresee the glorious fruits of it, but what can I do by myself? where are my companions?" "Here am I for one," answered Mazzini, "and I am sure other priests will be found willing to consecrate themselves to a work which must contribute so much to the glory of God." AVhile his mind was balancing in this uncertainty, M. Falcoja, Bishop of Castcllamare, arrived at Scala ; ho was a prelate of eminent sanctity, and skilled in the science of spirituality, and tho Bishop of Scala was not inferior to him ; the presence of those two saints, raised Mazzini's hopes, and ho urged Alphonso to consult with them. He was tho more willing to do this, because M. Falcoja was known in the Chinese College at Naples. He accordingly told them, and after several days spent in narrowly examining tho subject, they both agreed that the inspiration came from God, and that tho vision of the nun strengthened their confidence, she being a person peculiarly favoured by God, whose sincerity and truth were undoubted.* M. Falcoja in particular, saw in this event a special mark of Providence, for over since his elevation to the episcopal dignity, he had particularly de-

* This nun, Sister Mary Celeste Castarosa, suffered many persecutions because of the favours God bestowed upon her. Banished from her convent at Scala, she reformed a convent at Noura, and afterwards founded the Convent of St. Saviour at Foggia, for the education of the daughters of the nobility, which convent became the edification of the town. She died the 14th September, 1745; her body is still entire and unconsumed. The nuns open the coffin and clothe the body anew every time any of the sisterhood die.

sired the establishment of some such institution, seeing with pain the extreme destitution of the country people in regard to spiritual help. He felt the greatest consolation in the movement which grace operated in the heart of Alphonso, urging him with all his power to hasten the execution of his project.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Although peace and tranquillity usually accompany the operations of grace, yet in this instance Alphonso found himself surrounded by obstacles and tribulations. The interior lights which he received, and the advice of experienced and holy individuals, gave him great encouragement; while on the other hand, he looked on himself as devoid of strength and talent to undertake such an enterprise. At one moment, fearing to resist the grace that operated within him, he determined to do what God seemed to require of him; but he soon relapsed again in the fear, that he was presumptuous and rash. In this state of agitation he returned to Naples, and immediately opened his whole heart to his own spiritual director, Father Pagano. This sage director, after a careful consideration of some days, hesitated not to declare his opinion, that such an undertaking could not fail to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls; but doubting his own judgment he advised Alphonso to consult with more enlightened per-

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sons. He accordingly spoke with Father Vincent Cutico, Superior of the Mission of St. Vincent of Paul, and Father Manulius, a Jesuit, both of whom were much venerated in Naples. Their opinion coincided with Pagano's; they were all persuaded that it was the will of God, and urged him to respond to the call of Heaven. Still unconvinced he consulted others, eminent for their sanctity and wisdom, and finding all of the same mind, he could no longer doubt, but taking courage he gave himself unreservedly to God, sacrificing his love for his native city, and offering to spend his life in villages and remote hamlets among the poor shepherds and goat-herds.

We might suppose that now his mind would be at rest, and all would go well; but it was far otherwise. A work which was intended by God to promote the salvation of souls, not in Italy only, but in all other kingdoms of Europe, in Asia, and in America, could not fail to stir up all the powers of hell, to accomplish, if possible, its overthrow. As soon as his determination was known, all Naples seemed to be in arms against him. Some said he was mad, and that his brain must be affected; others treated him as a fanatic and a visionary; some affirmed that the high opinion he had of himself made him attempt extraordinary things, and that he had been spoiled by too much praise. It was in the Collegio of the Chinese he found his greatest adversaries; his companions there loaded him with blame and ridicule. Father Ripa was

then at Romo, but on his return lie also was vexed beyond measure, having calculated on his assistance in the establishment of his own Congregation ; he did all in his power to convince him that his plans were impossible, and useless even if they succeeded. Seeing, however, that his endeavours to dissuade him were vain, ho chose to believe with tho others that his head was affected, and that ho was the victim of some delusion, and reproached him both privately and publicly with what he called his extravagance. Others went still further, apparently instigated by the devil, who would employ every means to bring the measure into disgrace, and demolish a work destined in future ages to drag millions from his tyranny.

Tho Fathers of the Propaganda also ranged themselves against him ; ashamed to see ono of their brethren fall into what they considered such a weakness, ono whom all had thought so wise and such a credit to their society. Having heard of tho vision seen by the nun, they imagined it was the sole basis of his enterprise, and were shocked that he would allow himself to bo led away by the reveries of a young nun. But what afflicted Alphonso most of all, was, that these opinions were taken up by his uncle Matthew Gizzio, Rector of the Seminary, and by the Superior of the Propaganda, Julius Torni. Ho grieved at being obliged to resist them ; the rector was his uncle, to whom he had always looked up ; and the Superior had always loved him with a father's love, and had taught him

dogmatic and moral theology. They assailed him on every side, while he only replied that he would do nothing disapproved of by his director. This would not satisfy the two Canons, who were the more vexed at his resistance, because they loved him tenderly. Seeing their representations ineffectual, they began to reprimand him bitterly. “It is not God who directs you,” said his uncle, “but you blindly follow the reveries of a nun, and do not see that you are the victim of an illusion.” “I do not regulate my conduct by visions,” he meekly replied; “I regulate it by the Gospel.” On another occasion his uncle jeeringly asked him if he ever expected to realise his schemes. “Ho who trusts in God,” said he, “can do all, and should hope all.” At last he went so far, that in the presence of some other canons he treated him as a fool whose brain was turned by self-conceit. One day as he entered the sacristy of the Cathedral, several persons of consequence began to abuse him before others in authority who happened to be present; “Keep to your word now,” said they, “and make haste to show the Church those holy institutions and foundations which you have promised her. Alphonso said nothing, but bowing his head, humbled himself interiorly.

After some time his uncle insisted that he should take advice from Father Louis Fiorillo, a learned and pious Dominican, by whom he himself was guided. At first he declined, answering that he did not act according to

ST. ALPHONSO LIGUORI.

his own mind, but was guided in all things by his director, Father Pagano ; upon which D. Gizzio said no more ; but afterwards on repeating to Father Pagano what had passed, he expressed himself of the same opinion, and urged him to follow his uncle's advice, saying that he would consider Father Fiorillo's decision as the voice of God. Alphonso had never seen Fiorillo, and knew him only by reputation, but soon after met him one day accidentally at his uncle's ; the moment Fiorillo saw him, in a fit of inspiration he exclaimed, " God is not yet satisfied with you ; He wishes you to be altogether His, and expects great things from you." At these words of Fiorillo he seemed to breathe more freely, and felt his heart penetrated with new life. Full of confidence he took him aside, and told him of his desire to consult him, and a place of meeting was arranged.

He now began to perform the most severe penances, praying continually that the Father of Lights would enlighten His servant Fiorillo, on whose decision the affair seemed to depend. He recommended himself to the prayers of many holy individuals, but above all to the nun at the monastery of Scala. All the convent joined with her ; they prayed, they fasted, they gave themselves the discipline for half an hour each day ; all united in beseeching God to enlighten the directors of Alphonso. A singular thing now occurred : several of the nuns, yielding to the opinion of certain ill-disposed priests, believed that God would not establish this Congregation.

One day while they were disputing about it with the nun who had the revelation, she cried out in an ecstatic transport, "God wills this work, and you will see it accomplished!" "Yes," replied an incredulous nun, "I will believe it when Sister Mary Magdaleno is cured." This sister whom she mentioned, had been deranged for several years, but from that moment she perfectly recovered her senses!

CHAPTER XIX.

When Alphonso had made known to Father Fiorillo the light he had received from God at St. Mary of the Mount, and the light which he daily continued to receive, the man of God replied, "In a similar conjuncture St. Levus Bertrand asked six months from St. Theresa to reflect before giving an answer; I would ask the same from you." "Not six months only," said Alphonso, "take a whole year." Some days after he met him again, when the venerable father embraced him with joy, saying, "Go, take courage, this work is divine; throw yourself into the arms of God, as a stone which falls from the mountain into the valley. You will encounter contradictions doubtless, but place your confidence in God, he will help you." At this time, however, Father Fiorillo had many good works on hand, and fearing to scandalize the

clergy, who might overturn them, he begged Alphonso to conceal his approbation, and not visit him again. Satisfied now that he was acting according to the will of God, he feared no further contradictions, and began in earnest to look out for companions, tho Fathers Manulius and Cutica authorising him to do so. He wrote to Fiorillo, asking him to point out fitting individuals, who replied, “Do not suppose I forget you in a matter so immediately connected with the glory of God. I have your interest more at heart than ever; but be tranquil, God will provide assistance for a work so dear to Him. I have no labourers to offer you at this moment, but should I meet with any I shall not fail to send them to you; I wish that I were young, I would then gladly follow you, were it only to carry your baggage. Do not fear, though your number be small, for they will be strengthened to do the work of many. I bless you in the name of Jesus and Mary, and embrace you affectionately in the charity of our Lord.”

The noise of this enterprise resounded through Naples, and nothing was talked of but the new Congregation and its presumptuous founder. The Missionaries of the Propaganda, thinking that it cast a reflection upon them, were among the first to prepossess every one against Alphonso. They blamed him everywhere, and could not bear to hear him spoken of as one of them. The Canons Torni and Gizzio were extremely annoyed by the slur which it seemed to cast upon the Propaganda. They hoped that Fiorillo

would never approve of the project, and that at last Pagano himself would oppose it. Meeting Alphonso one day in the Church of the Cesaria, and finding him unaltered in his views, they attacked him more violently than ever. "Do you not see," said Gizzio, "that you are a visionary; all Naples is against you, neither Pagano nor Fiorillo are with you ; and yet, against the opinion of the most enlightened persons, you obstinately persist in your own notions, allowing yourself to be guided by the visions of a nun ; fool that you are, do you not see you are acting like an idiot ? " Alphonso meekly replied, " Say what you will, my uncle ; I assure you I am not acting in consequence of such visions, I am not following my own opinions, but am ruled by the word of God, and guided by those on whom I ought to rely." In circumstances such as these, his embarrassment was great ; he was bound not to betray Fiorillo who was then absent from Naples ; and on the other hand, the astonishment and scandal augmented every day. Pagano advised him not to keep the secret longer, because of the scandal given by appearing to act in opposition to all authority. F. Matthew Ripa, on the contrary, advised him to say nothing, but the Bishop of Cassano agreed with Pagano, while Manlius and Cutica were equally divided in opinion.

Not knowing how to act, he determined to consult M. Amato, Bishop of Ischia, and embarked one day in a little vessel to cross over to the island. To the amazement of the sailors they

performed the voyage in an hour and a half, he was fortunate in finding the Bishop of Casano there also ; both advised him to be guided by F. Pagano, and openly declared that Fiorillo approved of all he did. Again he made the voyage in an incredibly short space of time, and only waited to refresh himself before he visited the two Canons. Hardly had he entered the house when they attacked him as usual. “Are you not ashamed of yourself, scandalizing all Naples by your obstinacy, and acting in opposition to the opinion of F. Fiorillo? how can your conscience permit such a thing?” Then Alphonso calmly and firmly replied, “You are deceived in supposing I act contrary to the advice of F. Fiorillo ; my conduct is the result of the counsels he has given me.” He had provided himself with a copy of the letter Fiorillo had written to him on the subject, and as he ceased speaking he placed it in his uncle’s hands. Great was the confusion of both Gizzio and Torni. “But this is not sufficient,” said Torni ; “I would see the original.” Alphonso gave it to him. “Now,” said he, holding it in his hand, “I have no other testimony ; this is sufficient for the honour of my Congregation.”

After this he expected to have peace, as he could no longer be blamed for acting contrary to the opinion of wise directors; but the enemy of mankind would not yield without a further struggle. The brothers of the Propaganda refused to be reconciled with him, and threatened to turn him out of their Congregation. But

Cardinal Pignatelli, although he had been prejudiced against him, no sooner discovered the truth, than he warned the Canon Torni to beware how he took any steps against Alphonso Liguori.

Father Matthew Ripa, although now persuaded that he acted in accordance with the advice of Fiorillo, ceased not to accuse him of visionary schemes ; and in hopes of turning him from them, he proposed to hold a Council of Theologians in the Chinese College, to whose decision Alphonso should submit, he believed himself justified in opposing plans which would remove him from Naples, where he was certain to be most useful, and, above all, useful to the Chinese College. But Ripa had other reasons ; for some of his most distinguished subjects were inclined to follow Alphonso. Gennaro Sarnelli, son of the Baron of Ciorani, and Vincent Mandarini, from Calabria, were among these. At length he set no bounds to his opposition, speaking of the scheme as a suggestion of the devil, rather than an inspiration from God. he quarrelled with Pagano and Fiorillo, and wrote a very bitter letter to Mgr. Falcoja, whose reply is too admirable to be omitted here :

“Your esteemed letter has just been received, and whatever bitterness may be contained in it, still it is dear to me as coming from you. I reply to it immediately, because I would not that your annoyance should continue one moment longer if I can help it. You know that it does not belong to a spiritual father to give his peni-

tent any vocation which may happen to please himself; this gift belongs only to that Divine Providence who has made niches in Paradiso for the statues lie fashions upon earth, and on earth Ho establishes different studios, and is daily opening new, where these reasonable statues are to be moulded to perfection according to His most holy will, that they may be prepared for their position in everlasting glory. Now in order that they may not be all crowded together, God Himself has destined one to be sculptured in one studio, another in another. It is not the province of a spiritual father to do anything else but to approve or disapprove. When a soul is faithful to God and His holy words, 'Ho who hearth you hearth Me,' we may believe that he cannot wander. You may argue that a spiritual father can be deceived; but I would reply that God, who is always faithful, will not fail to communicate His will to those whom He has appointed to enlighten others; for if it were not so, what assurance could we have in deciding on what was God's will? Now inasmuch as Alphonso has followed this rule, he cannot go astray. I see from your letter that you judge and condemn me as one who would overturn your Congregation, and ruin a valuable work which owes all to your labours; but fear not; is the arm of the Lord shortened? is it not able to sustain your Congregation and many others at the same time? Let God perform His own work, for a work which comes from Him may aid, but cannot destroy another equally

Divine. But this enterprise, you say, will dissipate itself; if you say true, then you lose nothing; but according to my view of the case, this enterprise comes from God, and it cannot perish if he who is charged with it continues faithful; those therefore who oppose it, set themselves in opposition to the will of God.

“But you say this new work will take away some of your most valuable subjects. I wish, my dear father, you would put a little more confidence in God and less in man. The Congregation of Pious Workers had scarcely been established when four of their most excellent members left them, and founded four different Congregations. Notwithstanding the venerable fathers, Charles Carafa, and Anthony de Colellis, were not annoyed by fearing that their Congregation would be ruined; the contrary happened; they increased more and more by the arrival of other men whom the Father of the family sent to replace those who had left. Be persuaded that the work of Alphonso is no suggestion of the devil, but on the contrary, that the devil opposes it as the will of God, as he has done on a thousand other occasions when he foresaw that an institution would have the effect of destroying his empire in the world.”

It seems incredible, but yet it is true, this letter produced no effect on F. Ripa, who continued to blame Alphonso for his inconstancy; and even in his Memoirs of his Congregation complains bitterly of him and all who had any hand in approving or forwarding his projects.

CHAPTER XX.

When the Fathers Fiorillo and Pagano saw that the tempest, instead of abating rather increased, they began to fear for the success of their own immediate affairs, if they continued to bear the blame of giving counsel to Alphonso. They therefore strongly urged him to put himself entirely under the direction of Mgr. Falcoja, a man of undoubted wisdom and sanctity, and held in great consideration by all Naples. Alphonso was unwilling to withdraw himself from his present directors, having so long experienced the benefit of F. Pagano's counsels ; but the Feast of the Assumption approaching he resolved to apply for aid to his Blessed Mother. He made the Novena of the Feast in the Church so dear to him, the Church of the Redemption of Captives, where her statue was exposed during those nine days. The Divine Mother listened to her favoured child, and enlightened him regarding the course he ought to pursue. He placed himself in the hands of the holy prelate, promising to do nothing without his advice, and never was a child more obedient to a parent,

The Canon Torni, although persuaded of the wisdom of those who directed Alphonso, and the increasing approbation which his project received from the wise and the good, could not, however, bear the idea of his services being lost to

Naples. Having no hope of directly succeeding in opposing him, he began an indirect opposition in his quality of Superior of the Congregation of the Propaganda. He gave him the charge of several important matters, trusting that when he saw the good he was doing in Naples, he would give up the idea of going elsewhere. The beginning of October he commanded him in the name of the Cardinal to give a retreat to the clergy in the Church of St. Restitute ; he hoped that this opportunity of showing his talents would flatter his vanity, and make him anxious to regain the popularity he formerly enjoyed ; but he miscalculated : Alphonso was insensible to such attractions. He obeyed his superior, notwithstanding his repugnance to appear before those who had treated him so unjustly, and God poured out His benedictions on his labours more abundantly than over. The greater number of the clergy were touched to the heart, in spite of their prejudices against him. The Cardinal himself attended, and was so moved with compunction that he exclaimed, “ Who may easily see he is a vessel of election, for the Holy Spirit speaks by his mouth.” Many of the clergy who had been cold and indifferent, became from that time faithful and zealous pastors. No sooner was this retreat ended, than he was sent successively to three other churches to give a mission, when as before crowds from all quarters flocked to confession and to hear him preach. The Canon hoped that after such an abundant liar-

vest lie would no longer persist in his plans ; ho was mistaken however ; Alphonso was longing for the moment when the arrangements would be completed for him to commune his new Congregation in the town of Scala, in concert with the Bishop, Mgr. Santoro.

Mgr. Falcoja, seeing that the storm still continued to rage, would put his constancy to further proof, and delayed to give him his parting benediction. The work was great, and he continued to solicit the prayers of holy persons, that the designs of his penitent might be blessed ; he counselled him to do nothing precipitate ; but those days of delay seemed ages to Alphonso, who on one occasion wrote to him thus : “ My father, for charity’s sake be quick, quick, quick ; I am dying with anxiety to set off ; call me away from this, and release me from the obedience under which I am remaining at Naples. The devil is doing all he can to hinder our commencing immediately, but let us hasten to the work, where he will be able to do nothing, and we shall succeed as we ought. I am on the eve of the last days of the holy exercises, and to-day I must speak to my good Mother Mary. Pray always for me, but always, always ; and then quick, quick, quick for the glory of Jesus and Mary.”

Many were the contradictions and annoyances he experienced during the last days he remained, particularly from F. Ripa and his uncle Gizzio ; because they loved him, they thought they had a right forcibly to drag him

from an enterprise they considered extravagant. They must not be condemned however ; they acted according to their conscience, and God in His impenetrable Providence sometimes permits His servants to fall into similar mistakes ; it may be to keep them humble, and as a means of advancing the sanctity of both parties. In after times, those who had opposed him now, lauded his enterprise when they saw the blessings of Heaven accompanying his work.

CHAPTER XXI.

In spite of the outcry made against him by many influential individuals, there were still a number of zealous priests who declared their willingness to accompany him on his arduous mission. But when the moment arrived for putting their promises in execution, many, like the men spoken of in the Gospel, drew back, alleging apparently reasonable excuses. One was prevented by the necessity of watching over the interests of his family ; another was attached to some congregation which he could not well leave ; in short, many found an excuse, so that the number of those who put their hand to the plough without looking back were small indeed.

One of his first companions was D. Vincent Mandarini, a noble Calabrian, who had studied at Naples and was an excellent theologian. He was like Alphonso, a pensioner in the Chinese

College. The abbé D. Silvester Tosquez, a gentleman of the town of Troja, and a great friend of Mandarini, joined them ; he was an excellent man, and well versed in jurisprudence and theology. Don Janvier Sarnelli, son of the Baron of Ciorani, and one of the Chinese College, followed Alphonso. Ho had great talents, both natural and acquired, besides being a man of eminent virtue. His other companions were men equally estimable and enlightened. Don Peter Romano of Scala, Doctor Sportelli from Aquaviva, Don Jerome Manfredi, Don John Baptist Donato, Don Joseph Banza, and two others whose names are unknown. Mazzini would have joined him at first, had not his director insisted on his delaying in order to prove his vocation.

These subjects were for Alphonso as so many foundation stones, upon which he erected in the Church that edifice which had so much occupied his mind. All were animated with the most lively zeal for the glory of God, and full of devotion to the cause in which they had engaged. Sportelli and Tosquez, although still seculars, rendered the greatest services, and, if possible, aspired even more than the others to a superhuman sanctity.

To found this great work Alphonso sought neither to lean on the favour of men nor on the riches of the world, but put all his confidence in God and in the protection of the holy Virgin Mary, a protection of which ho was already assured by the most striking proofs. A gentleman named Vitus Curzius, whose vocation was evi-

dently miraculous, was the first who joined him in quality of lay-brother. He had been secretary to the Baron of Vasto, and was very intimate with Sportelli. His disposition, however, was proud and quarrelsome, and in dispute he was too apt to appeal to his sword and pistol. Providence, however, had preserved him from homicide. Sportelli had not communicated to him his design of quitting the world, when one day, happening to meet in the street, Curzius told him a dream he had had the previous night. "I thought," said he, "that I stood at the foot of a high and steep mountain, which many priests were trying to ascend. I wished to imitate them, but the first step I took I fell backwards. Not willing to give up the attempt, I tried to mount several times, but to my great annoyance I always slid back, until one of the priests, taking compassion on me, gave me his hand and helped me to ascend."

In the course of the day as they were walking together near the Chinese College, they met Alphonso, when Curzius, who had never before seen him, turned in astonishment to Sportelli, exclaiming, "There is the priest who gave me his hand last night." Exceedingly surprised, he saw the mystery of the dream, and telling Curzius that this was Alphonso Liguori, who was about to found a new Congregation of missionary priests, and his own intention to join him, the young man instantly recognised the Divine Will, and unhesitatingly declared his desire to be of the number, not as a priest, but as a lay-brother.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

The year 1732 was destined by God to give birth to the Congregation of Rcdemptorists. Pope Clement XII. occupied the chair of Peter, and the Emperor Charles VI. sat on the throne of Naples. After receiving the benediction of the Fathers Pagano and Fiorillo, Alphonso, without acquainting either friends or relations, hired a miserable donkey, and departed from Naples on the 8th of November, directing his steps towards the town of Scala. M. Santoro, who impatiently expected him, received him as an angel sent from heaven, and blessed God that he had lived to see such a happy day. The nobility, the clergy, the people, all rejoiced in his arrival with his missionaries, and spoke of nothing but the good they were certain to do. The day on which he left Naples he completed two sacrifices ; the definitive renunciation of all the splendours of the world, and the entire disruption of the ties of flesh and blood. This last completed the numerous sacrifices he had already made. Since the

month of August he had quitted the Chinese College, and returned to his father's, for the better arranging of his affairs. Don Joseph, who loved him less as a son than as a spiritual father, was miserable at the thought of losing him, and one day he entered his room when he had lain down to take a little repose, and throwing himself on the bed beside him, pressed him in his arms and exclaimed, "My son, why will you abandon me? My son, I do not deserve that you should cause me so much misery." Caught by surprise, Alphonso suffered most intensely, and this scene lasted during three hours, his father holding him in a close embrace, repeating always, "My son, do not abandon me." He afterwards spoke of this trial as the most terrible he ever had to endure.

On arriving at Scala he was joined by only eight of his companions; Mazzini, Sarnelli, and Tosqucz were obliged from certain circumstances to delay. He had a letter from Tosquez, who wrote thus: "How happy you are, who can now suffer during this inclement season the cold and hunger suffered by Jesus Christ! I am unworthy to share your lot; the Lord will not yet satisfy the burning desire I have to join you; He wishes to purify the ardour of my desires, and I wish only to perform His Holy will."

The dwelling prepared by the Bishop for his new missionaries, accorded in every respect with their wishes; it was an hospice belonging to a convent almost destitute of furniture, and

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small and inconvenient ; besides a small oratory there wore only a parlour, and three little rooms, containing palliases and scanty coverings, with a few earthen dishes for the table and tho kitchen. The day after their arrival they assembled in tho Cathedral, and after a long meditation chanted the Mass of the Holy Spirit, thanking God for the establishment of a Congregation so ardently desired. At that time they gave it the name of “ *The Holy Saviour* ” placing it under tho protection of the Chief of all Missionaries. As the work was undertaken only to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls, Alphonso would build up the edifice according to this design. Ho proposed to form a company of priests animated with great zeal, who would willingly embrace a species of apostolic life, conformable to the life of Jesus Christ ; that is to say, he would have them humble and poor, making an entire abnegation of themselves, and of all tho things of the earth.

They applied themselves seriously to prayer and penitence ; their hearts overflowing with love to God, they embraced every opportunity of mortifying themselves ; they wore sack cloth and small chains with sharp points. But it was at the hours of repast, those hours when the world seeks after sensual enjoyments, that these holy men signalized their love of mortification. Some kissed tho ground ; others knelt and remained for a length of time with their arms extended in form of a cross ; another mado the round of the refectory, kissing the feet of

each of his brethren. They ate kneeling, or lying on the floor, while others, to make the moments of eating still more uncomfortable, hung a heavy stone round their neck. Their wretched food was seasoned with bitter herbs ; many would not taste meat, or if they ate it they abstained from fruit. Their food was of such a quality that the poor hesitated to accept what was left. Vitus Curzius was cook, and as he knew nothing of cookery, he spoiled every thing he attempted to make ; he would serve the vegetables raw, the pottage burned or without salt, and he would bake the bread without remembering to put in leaven. Such was the life these missionaries led at Scala ; a realization of the mystic ladder spoken of by St. John Climacus.

As for Alphonso, he occupied himself with God only, “ instant in prayer,” reading the Lives of the Saints, or labouring to save souls. His application was continual ; his mass was long, sometimes lasting for hours ; and besides the general prayers of the community he spent hours in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, realizing the feelings of the Psalmist when he exclaimed, “ As the hart panteth for the water springs, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God.” He pushed his austerities to such an excess, that the utmost the others could do, was to imitate him. He sometimes seasoned his miserable pottage with such herbs, that those who were near him could hardly endure the smell ; and not content with wearing sackcloth, chains, and crosses armed with sharp points, he gave

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himself the discipline twice a-day. The care he bestowed on his own perfection and that of his companions, did not hinder him from attending to the people of Scala. He introduced the custom of giving a meditation in the Cathedral every morning, and making visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the Virgin Mary every evening. Every Thursday he gave a sermon and exposition of the Holy Sacrament, and every Saturday he preached on the glories of the Blessed Virgin. On Sundays and other feast days he instructed the people on their individual duties, and catechised them. He established two confraternities, one for gentlemen and another for artisans ; and two similar to these for young people of different sexes ; and every Sunday each of these confraternities received a particular instruction. In a word, Scala was in a short time thoroughly reformed, to the great satisfaction of M. Santoro. Seeing himself so well seconded by the zeal of his companions, Alphonso made missions to the different towns and villages round about, so that the renown of the new Congregation began to spread everywhere, and bishops were constantly beseeching their assistance for their flocks, while many offered them establishments in their dioceses ; but the want of subjects prevented him acceding to those requests.

CHAPTERS II. AND III.

When an error is once embraced by the multitude, it takes such deep root that years are often necessary to eradicate it. The Fathers of the Propaganda, instead of becoming reconciled to the step taken by Alphonso, showed themselves always more and more embittered against him, notwithstanding all the endeavours of their superior, Torni, to disabuse them. The more moderate admitted his sanctity, but affirmed he was the victim of illusion. All imagined that his leaving them to pursue his own plans was giving a blow to their honour, which they would not easily recover, and that their only way to remedy it was to load him with contempt and ridicule. Their conduct deeply wounded him, and he was grieved to see pious and zealous servants of God partaking in the prejudices of the world, and rather exciting than preventing them. Persuaded that honour and purity, with rectitude of judgment, are the true riches of a minister of God, he saw with grief and alarm his ancient brethren striving with all their might to despoil him of them. He complained to the Canon Torni, who loved him as a father, and sent him the following reply: “I could not refrain from weeping when I read your letter, in which you speak of the contradictions which crush you. I cease not to pray for you, and I trust the Lord will give that strength to your soul which

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is so necessary to enable you to bear courageously the tribulations which His Providence permits in order to prove you, and that He will enlighten you to see clearly the designs of His holy will." His letter was full of the most friendly assurances, and Alphonso failed not to consult him on all his plans and regulations for his new Congregation. But the life of the just is a continual combat. The peace he had found in the friendly behaviour of Tornì, was soon attacked by the renewed violence of the Fathers of the Propaganda. They clamoured against Tornì, and insisted that he should expel Alphonso, and deprive him of his chaplainship. He thought himself obliged to yield, and on the 20th of February, to the great joy of all, they affixed to the door this announcement: "According to the order of our Superior, on Monday, the 23rd February, 1733, there will be a general investigation on these questions, * Whether the brother D. Alphonso de Liguori should be expelled from the Congregation? and whether he ought to be deprived of his chaplainship?" It was with much regret Tornì found himself obliged to yield; but to prevent the vexatious proceeding going further, he secretly informed the Cardinal of what was about to be done, and expressed his opinion of its injustice. "One may see," he said, "that it is a madness which, not content with blasting his reputation, would take from him the means of subsistence." The Cardinal was exceedingly vexed, but he would not hinder the convocation. "Let them doli-

berate,” he said, “but fear nothing; I will provide for the result, and settle everything in the most expedient way.”

The Congregation assembled on the appointed day, animated with incredible rancour. All wished to have Alphonso expelled from their society, and deprived of his benefice. In order to prevent any interference in his favour, they proceeded secretly with the scrutiny, and his expulsion was unanimously decided upon. But they could not register this decree, because the Cardinal had forbid any steps to be taken against Alphonso without informing him.

When the meeting broke up, the Superior, Canon, and some of the principal members, went to the Cardinal to tell him what had been done: his Eminence was much displeased. “Why,” said he, “do you proceed to such extremities? either God will bless the enterprise of Alphonso, and it will prove a glorious thing for you, or He will overthrow it; and then all that could be said would be, that it was a good work, though it had proved unsuccessful. In any case, I do not see how you can find dishonour in it.” Then assuming a dignified tone, he concluded with those words: “I am Superior of this Congregation, and I desire that Alphonso de Liguori be reinstated, and that he continue to enjoy his chaplainship; and I forbid any steps being taken against him unknown to me.” This firm conduct arrested the flame, but did not extinguish it. The deputies retired, silenced and disconcerted, but still determined never to recognise him as a member of their Congregation.

CHAPTER IV.

The storm was subsiding at Naples, in consequence of the firm conduct of the Cardinal, and Alphonso was living at Scala in profound peace, when God would try His servant still more severely, by permitting discord to arise in the bosom of the new-born Congregation. They began to dispute about the rules by which they ought to be guided, and opinions were so opposed that union was broken, and the society threatened with dissolution.

Alphonso wished that the now Congregation should be occupied only in labouring to promote the sanctification of clergy and laity, giving them spiritual exercises in convents, and procuring also the salvation of destitute souls in the country and small hamlets by means of missions. His views were based on the experience he had had, that the word of God had not penetrated into these remote places. Mandarini proposed, that, besides the missions, they should occupy themselves in teaching; but Alphonso opposed this, because the Jesuits and other religious orders supplied this want. He added, that the spirit of the Instituto finding itself divided between two objects so different as teaching and giving missions, both would be fulfilled in an imperfect manner, since there would be too few labourers to undertake both branches; and further,

as missions would occupy them the greater part of the year, it would be impossible that returning to the house with a mind distracted by other occupations, they could apply themselves to regular teaching. The others had each their individual opinion, and D. Tosquez, going still further, insisted that as the end of the Institute was to imitate Jesus Christ, it was necessary to be dressed in a dark red cassock and a mantle of celestial blue, as these were the colours our Saviour was supposed to have worn.

Some disliked the recitation of the Office in common; others objected to sleep on straw, besides other austerities to which they would not submit. They disliked practising poverty in all its rigour, and renounced the perfection which community life exacted, yet it was to community life that Alphonso principally held. Tosquez gave in to a contrary excess, and would embrace the reform of the most austere mendicant order, insisting that each should sell everything he possessed, and lay the price of it at the feet of his superior.

Alphonso could not help laughing at these proposals of Tosquez, assuring him that it would be too absurd for simple priests to appear in masquerade by adopting a blue and red costume, and that he feared the Ananiases would be so numerous that it would be impossible to bury all those who should come forward with a lie in their mouths. He approved of establishing a choir, because it was a good means of reciting the Office well; but he would not have

a formal one with a chant, only simple recitation. He insisted on the vow of poverty, because without it the spirit of Christ would be wanting, and it would be impossible to observe the common life, which is the mother of poverty. "If," said he, "the words *mine* and *thine* are found among brethren, great inconveniences will result; they will go on the mission, not for God, not to gain souls to Christ, but for emolument and for themselves."

All these opposing sentiments could not fail to disturb his serenity; he spoke, he supplicated in vain; they shut their ears to all he said. Fearing a total shipwreck, he had recourse to prayer, while at the same time he neglected no human means. He consulted Mgr. Falcoja, Father Pagano, and the Canon Torni, all of whom looked upon it as a stratagem of the devil. They decidedly opposed Mandarinini's plan of teaching, notwithstanding which, all the others joined him in sustaining this point.

These great diversities of opinions cooled their charity, and this was particularly the case with Mandarinini. Finding himself alone, Alphonso wrote thus to Mgr. Falcoja: "My father, it is most painful for me to associate with Mandarinini; I have thought much of it lately, and it is the love of Jesus Christ alone that could render it supportable; thank God, who gives me grace to sustain my courage amid these storms. See what I have deserved, ever since to obey God I have left all and suffered the reproaches of friends and relations; yet as you counsel me, I put my con-

fidence in God, for all the world has abandoned me. My father, do not you abandon me, for without you what could I do ; command, and I shall obey. I can say no more, only have pity upon me.”

These discussions lasted long. Mandarinini persisted in his scheme for teaching, and thought Alphonso ought to yield because the others were of his opinion. He remained firm however, and at length all left him but Sportelli, and founded a house at Tramonti, where they opened schools for youth. But the powers of hell, who believed they had gained a victory, were deceived ; for on the one hand the work of Alphonso suffered no injury, and on the other, this apparently unfortunate separation gave birth to the venerable Congregation of the most Holy Sacrament, of which Mandarinini and his companions were the authors, a Congregation which has produced many men distinguished as instructors of youth, and as spiritual directors.

CHAPTER V.

The withdrawal of Mandarinini and his companions is supposed to have taken place about the March of the year 1733, just four months after they had met at Scala. This separation was not made without deep regret, even on the part of those who were its cause, for their intentions were good, and they only differed with

Alphonso on the means of putting them in execution ; and these regrets augmented when distance and calm had effaced the agitation of opposition. Mandarini arrived at Naples, convinced of the insufficiency of his friend's schemes, and determined to have nothing more to do with them ; he occupied himself with schemes of his own : but seeing the zeal of Alphonso, and the abundant harvest it produced, Mandarini, anxious if possible to persuade him to follow, wrote to him in April, " If your Reverence would only come to us, we all most earnestly desire and pray for a reunion ; it was not our intention to separate, but to live united in the peace of Jesus Christ, but if (as I will not believe) you persist in remaining separate from us, it will be for us the greatest misfortune ; but I hope our Lord and His good Mother will not permit it to happen."

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Although Alphonso saw himself abandoned and almost alone, he would not follow Mandarini ; despising human assistance, he fixed his confidence on God only, and the result proved the wisdom of acting thus. But though he had endured the blow caused by these divisions with all the strength of a soul which rests on God, he did not the less feel a bitter sorrow. God sustained him on the one hand, but on the other the devil assailed him with suggestions full of despair. It was but a few short weeks since he had been surrounded by learned and pious men, united with him in a glorious enterprise which commanded the admiration of the multi-

tudo, and now not one remained but Sportelli and Vitus Curzius the lay-brother. These gloomy thoughts filled him with sadness. The rocks of Scala, once so dear to his heart, now looked frowning and gloomy. He imagined he heard the taunts and the jeers uttered in the saloons of Naples, when the failure of his enterprise became known, and he shuddered at the discredit that would overwhelm him. Thoughts such as these crushed his spirit. He stood balancing between a confidence in God, which never deserted him, and a diffidence in himself, which bowed him to the earth. In the midst of his affliction he thought of M. Falcoja. He sought him at Castellamaro, certain of finding consolation and strength, and trusting in his assistance to weather the storm; but God would not give him this comfort: he found the Bishop disgusted with the whole affair. He had upheld Alphonso in his enterprise, and defended him against all his opponents; but at length, like the Canon Torni, he became tired and worn out with the continual dissensions, and wounded at the disgrace which must fall upon himself from the failure of the scheme. He received him therefore with marked coldness; and before he had time to explain the object of his visit, he addressed him in those words: "Vultis et vos abire. God has no need of you and your companions; if it be His will that this work should go on, He will raise up other labourers to fill your place." For a moment Alphonso stood stupified by this reception, so different from

what he had expected ; but immediately regaining courage he said, “ My Lord, I am well convinced that the Almighty has no need of me or of my labours ; notwithstanding I believe it to be His will that I should proceed in this work, and singly and alone as I am, I shall yet succeed.” He continued, “ I have not left Naples, I have not renounced the world, to gain the glory of founding a new order ; but to do the will of God and promote His glory.” This reply touched M. Falcoja deeply, and suddenly changing his manner he said, “ Put your confidence in God, and He will certainly bless your good intentions.” On the whole he returned to Scala much comforted by this interview ; but the devil would not leave him in peace. D. Sportelli was often necessarily absent, and when he found himself alone on this desert mountain, disgust, anxiety, and depression assailed him more strongly than ever. He knew whence these temptations came, and one day when they were at their height he threw himself on his knees, and solemnly vowed to consecrate himself irrevocably to the salvation of destitute souls, even if he should remain altogether alone. God evidently blessed this heroic action ; for from that moment his fears and anxieties vanished, and he felt himself filled with courage, hope, and consolation. Even in his old age, he could not remember without a shudder the terrible struggle he had then sustained ; and he said to F. Dominic Corsano, his director, that this and his separation from his father were the two most dreadful trials he had ever undergone.

It was not without reason he had dreaded the effect this rupture would produce in Naples. No sooner did it become known that the new founder was abandoned by his companions, and that the far-famed society was dissolved, than every one laughed at and ridiculed the whole proceeding, condemning the fanaticism of the protended head of the Congregation, who had blindly lent himself to the dreamy fancies of a woman. They went the length of affirming, that the Pope himself had interfered, and forbidden the establishment of such a Congregation. And who would believe it ! even the pulpits resounded with anathemas ; the preachers pretending to show by these events, to what an extent even the most favoured individuals can go astray when they allow themselves to be caught in the snares of the devil, and to forget the precepts of humility. They cited by name Alphonso de Liguori, who, by a blind confidence in himself, was entangled in illusions most dangerous to his salvation. At this crisis even his friends were silenced by their own share of the contempt and mockery which they received. No one dared to defend him ; no one was to be found in all Naples who would say one word in defence of him or his advisers. Father Fiorillo alone saw that all this was the work of the devil, and continued to be convinced that God would uphold His own work. The Cardinal Pignatelli was not the last to be informed of the overthrow of the enterprise ; he pitied Alphonso, but he did not condemn him. “There was nothing repre-

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hensible in it, " he said ; " but who can know the judgments of God?" and touched by the embarrassment in which ho found himself, he desired the Canon Torni to recall him to Naples.

Every one can imagine the reception Alphonso had to expect in this city, and how much it must have cost him to return at such a moment. On all sides ho saw himself contemned and turned into ridicule ; his simple presence there was a triumph for his enemies, and he felt he was an object of aversion even to his relations and friends. Tho Canon Matthew Gizzio refused to see him or hear his name mentioned. Father Ripa would have nothing to do with him, and it was tho same with many others who had once held him in tho highest veneration.

He went to the Cardinal accompanied by the Canon Torni. This wise prelate was afflicted to bear of the number of lies that had been circulated against him. The Canon, who wished to retain Alphonso at Naples, remarked, that if this work had been pleasing to God He would not have withdrawn tho means of carrying it into execution ; and that surely he could bo more useful at Naples than elsewhere. These words wore a new temptation to him, but ho would not yield to it, and far from being cast down he replied with entire confidence, " Wo have reason to be convinced that the devil is the author of what has happened at Scala ; but it must not be said that I have allowed myself to be conquered because tho demon has come across my path. It my first companions have

deserted me, that is no reason why other zealous priests should not be found ; but so that as it may, I do not hesitate even alone to sacrifice myself for the good of destitute souls scattered through the villages and hamlets of this kingdom." The Cardinal could not help admiring the heroism of this speech, and turning towards the Canon, he said, " It will not do to abandon Scala just yet ; let us have recourse to God in order to know His holy will." Then encouraging Alphonso he continued, " Trust in God, put no confidence in man, for it is God who will help you." He approved his constancy, and advised him against a reunion with those who had already separated themselves from him.

Consoled by the sentiments of the Cardinal, he returned to Scala full of hope and confidence ; while the opinions expressed by his Eminence disconcerted those who railed against him, and reduced them to silence.

CHAPTER VI.

When the tempest had abated, and peace had returned to the soul of Alphonso, he enjoyed in the solitude of Scala an anticipated Paradise. Their number consisted of three, D. Sportelli, who was still a lay-man, Vitus Curtius, the lay-brother, and himself. Curtius was necessarily often left alone, notwithstanding he regularly rung the bell for the

Office at the hours fixed upon, to the great edification of this little town. Always assiduous in the church, he was there at the earliest hour of the morning, regretting he could not pass the night there. Although alone, he performed all his duties as if there had been a multitude of religious.

In this solitude Alphonso reposed in the bosom of his God, and he soon had the consolation of seeing his convent frequented by new subjects, who aspired to enter the Congregation. Rejoicing to find his hopes realised, the fervent community resembled a little Paradise. Writing to a friend in July, 1733, he says, “Our novices think neither of country, nor friends, nor even of sufferings ; all their desire is to love God and perfectly conform themselves to His will.”

About this time they quitted the hospice of the nuns for a house called Anastasius, but equally poor with the first. One who saw it describes it as follows: “There was one small parlour, in which Alphonso had made an oratory and erected a crucifix so beautifully carved that it drew tears from the eyes. The bishop had arranged for the church a square apartment underground, which looked more like a burial vault than a chapel. Poverty reigned everywhere, in the house and in the church ; they had not even a tabernacle for the Blessed Sacrament, and Alphonso placed it in a box ornamented with ribbons and silk drapery. The altar was also poor, but they embellished it as well as they could with roses and bouquets of artificial flowers.

Alphonso and his companions passed the greater part of the night there, taking a little repose on the bare earth before the Blessed Sacrament.»

After Mandarini and his companions quitted Scala, the spirit of penitence and prayer reigned there as before, and if possible increased when new disciples arrived. All breathed self-denial and mortification, Alphonso as usual signaling himself among the others ; he was the soul of the house, each one feeling himself impelled to imitate him. At the side of the house of Anastasius was a half-ruined grotto, where every day he submitted his body to the most rigorous penances. There is a tradition preserved among the inhabitants, that while he was chastising his body the Blessed Virgin appeared to him, and bestowed upon him many special favours. In after years, when he had attained to an extreme old age, he still sighed after this beloved grotto, and could never detach himself from the hallowed remembrance. Whenever he returned to visit Scala he sought his cherished grotto, exclaiming, “ O my grotto, my beloved grotto, why can I not possess thee now as in times long past ! ” In short, this grotto was for him the mystic cellar, out of which he came inebriated with Love Divine, and burning with desire to promote the glory of God.

Four months had scarcely elapsed since the departure of Mandarini, when Alphonso with his new companions found himself in a position to give missions in the neighbouring dioceses until the Christmas of that year. In the meantime

he had been joined by the priest Sarnelli of Ciorani, with whom he was united by the most intimate ties of friendship; and in January following, he yielded to his pressing solicitations, and accompanied him to the territory of Ciorani. The inhabitants of this country never lost the remembrance of this first visit, in which they were edified as much by the holy example of these two friends, as by the instructions they gave. They spent but a few days there, being called by the Bishop of Cajazzo to make a mission in his diocese. The general reformation of manners which followed, excited the most ardent longing for their establishing a house in that diocese, but they were not yet sufficiently numerous. At Formicola, in the principality of Columbano, was a house with a church adjoining, extremely well suited for the Congregation; and among those who were most anxious to see them established there, was a young nobleman, Xavier Rossi, belonging to a patrician family at Capua. He exerted himself to the utmost, sent for an architect to arrange the necessary alterations and repairs, and soon the building was begun at his own expense. Xavier had received the priest's orders, and Alphonso, delighted with the purity of soul he found in him, said one day, "Don Xavier, it is first of all yourself whom God wishes to have, and afterwards this foundation." It was a prophecy fulfilled somewhat later; for at this moment, though filled with admiration for the life led by Alphonso and his companions, he had not the courage to imitate them. But after a

while, a sudden movement of grace led him to Alphonso one morning as he was about to say mass ; Xavier served, and as ho afterwards said, when he saw at tho altar not a man, but a Seraph, ho felt impelled in spite of himself to follow him. Alphonso saw his emotion, and earnestly prayed tho sacred heart of Jesus to captivate his young protector ; his prayers were so effectual that the moment the mass was finished, Xavier threw himself at his feet, desiring to bo admitted into his Congregation. Ho would prove his sincerity by delay, but he gave so many proofs of strong determination, that ho soon admitted him to his novitiate. He afterwards became a corner-stone in the new-born Congregation, and died a Saint after having rendered the greatest services.

This foundation exactly suited tho views of Alphonso, being situated on the confines of four dioceses, surrounded by a great number of villages, and a thickly-peopled country. At the beginning of March the building was so far advanced that they could inhabit it. Four apartments level with the ground, resting against the church, which had formerly been occupied by hermits, wore given to the Missionaries, and four chaplainships were assigned to them with a revenue from each, of one carlino a-day, that is, fourpence halfpenny of our money. The Church was public property, and tho Fathers merely had tho uso of it for their ministry. This was certainly but little with which to found an establishment of Missionaries ; but Alphonso looked

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for souls, not for money, and contented himself with a small and poor house distinguished from others only by a belfry, after the example of St. Theresa, whose life he loved to imitate.

No sooner was the house established than he undertook different good works to promote the salvation of the people in the neighbourhood. He gave frequent missions. Every Thursday the Blessed Sacrament was solemnly exposed, and a sermon preached. On Saturday there was a sermon in honour of the Blessed Virgin. And Sunday scarcely sufficed for all that was to be done. In the morning a confraternity of men met in the Church ; during the day there was a sermon followed by “the Way of the Cross.” The children were assembled for instruction, and alms were distributed to the poor. Every day of the week they met with the people for mental prayer in the morning, and in the evening for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

While the building continued to go on the people eagerly assisted in the work, and even some of the neighbouring nobles might be seen mingling with the others in carrying materials. Alphonso was the first to show the example, labouring like a simple workman ; and when the gentlemen insisted on his stopping, he replied, “This is nothing, I wish to have my share of merit with the others.” It happened one day that a poor woman was carrying a large stone, when another equally large fell from the building upon her head ; every one thought the blow was mortal, but Alphonso, who saw

the accident from a distance, entered the church, and addressed himself to the Blessed Virgin : his prayer was heard, tho woman rose up unhurt. None were more zealous than the young novice Rossi ; not only did he give all he could call his own, but he also went about the country begging alms for the work, he laboured incessantly, without regard to the excessive heat or the streams that interrupted his passage.

Alphonso remained until the month of August, and boro he had the happiness of receiving John Mazzini, who had so long boon wishing to join him. Such was his opinion of this father's sanctity and wisdom, that he immediately made him rector of the new house. But his joy on this occasion had its usual mixture of sorrow ; for he lost at this time a young clerk of great merit, whoso friends violently forced him away. Michael Altcriis had lately joined the Congregation, and his father, irritated because of the noise this event made in the world, came to the house with a body of police to carry him off. Alphonso helped him to escape during the night ; but his friends and relations were so enraged that the Cardinal advised his being sent back to his family. " This victory will cost them dear," said Alphonso ; and hardly had the young man returned to his father, when the eldest son died. " I have carried one off from God," he exclaimed in his despair, " and God has carried one off from me." Michael afterwards became an indefatigable labourer in the Lord's vineyard, and

died in the odour of sanctity, as stated in his Memoirs, published soon after his death.

The life which Alphonso led with his brethren in this new house, "The Villa of Slaves," was equally admirable with the life he had led at Scala. An eye-witness reports that every day he ate on his knees, with a heavy stone hung round his neck; his food usually consisted of simple pottage, seasoned with bitter herbs; besides taking the discipline in common, he took it privately every day, and the walls of his room were covered with blood; the hair-cloth he wore was so heavy he could hardly walk; his sleep was short, a stone served him for a pillow, and his straw mattress was so thin, he might be said to sleep on the boards. His humility was extraordinary: before and after meals he kissed the feet of all; he never used a razor, but cut his beard with a pair of scissors; his cassock was so worn and mended that the original form could hardly be recognised; he never went on horseback, but always on foot or on a mule, which he said was good enough for him. A profound silence was generally observed in the house; towards evening they all met together to converse on eternal truths, and the hour of recreation after their frugal supper was still an uninterrupted conference on spiritual subjects. Such was the species of life led by Alphonso and his companions, and besides the three meditations which they made every day in common, he was continually in prayer, and spoke only when absolutely necessary.

This now house attracted a great many priests and young men into the Congregation ; everywhere they spoke of the sanctity of Alphonso, exciting each other to join him ; but as one of the fathers remarked, if subjects presented themselves in crowds, they withdrew in crowds also, for few could sustain a life so painful from the extreme poverty they practised. His former companions, Tosquez and Mandarinini, pursued a different route. A brother of Tosquez having died at Vienna, he went there to superintend the arrangement of his affairs. On his way he visited the Pope, Clement XII., to obtain a dispensation to be promoted to the priesthood. On his arrival at Vienna, he showed so much talent for the administration of political affairs, that the Pope hearing of it, made him, on his return, inspector of all the ports on the Adriatic situated in the Roman States. Every week he had a private audience which gave him admission to the Council of Cardinals charged with civil affairs. It was thus that from a missionary and founder of a new order in the Church, he became a financier and minister of state. He repented of the absurd projects he had suggested to Alphonso, and often spoke of him in the highest terms to his Holiness, who took in consequence a great interest in his success, and promised to second his laudable designs with all his power. Sometime after Mandarinini came to Rome, and equally regretting the divisions that had happened, he went with Tosquez to the Pope to render justice to Alphonso. They told

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his Holiness of the zeal which animated him, his great labours, the destitution of the people to whom he had devoted himself, the number of houses he had founded with his small means'; and the Pope, delighted with all he heard, again promised to do everything he could for him. Upon this Mandarini wrote to Alphonso, urging him to come to Rome immediately, because of the favourable dispositions expressed towards him by the Pope. But he saw no advantage to be obtained from this at the present juncture, and he sent a polite but indecisive reply.

CHAPTER VII.

When the new foundation of the Villa do' Schiavi (of the Slaves) was sufficiently consolidated, Alphonso returned to the house at Scala. The good that had been done during his absence by Doctor, now Father Sportelli, gave him great consolation, which was increased by finding many candidates for the novitiate awaiting him with impatience. In the course of the autumn he gave several missions in the neighbourhood and elsewhere. In January, 1735, he returned to the territory of Cajazzo, visiting the house of the Villa do' Schiavi; where he remained some time. At the request of Mgr. Santoro he consented rather unwillingly to preach the Lent in the Cathedral of Scala, when he also gave retreats in the parish of St. Catharine, and to the nuns of

St. Cataldo. He then returned again to the Villa.

There had been doubtless some hidden reason which induced F. Sarnelli to lead Alphonso into the territory of Ciorani, and this now began to manifest itself. He ardently desired to see a house of the Congregation established in that barony, especially as the neighbourhood was thickly peopled. God blessed his good intentions; for no sooner did the Curate, Angelo Guadiello, learn the good that was done in the neighbouring parishes, than both he and his flock desired ardently to have them. No one entered more into the spirit of this plan than the brother of F. Sarnelli, Don Andrew. He persuaded his father, the Baron, of the immense advantages that would result, and easily obtained his consent, he then set himself to procure the means of carrying it into execution, and by the month of April he had secured for their maintenance a rent of one hundred ducats, which was afterwards increased to three hundred, and at last to five hundred.

When the Archbishop of Salerno was informed of what was going on at Ciorani, his *joy was* boundless, and an agreement was immediately made with him. After all was settled Alphonso, with the fathers Mazzini and Rossi, returned to Ciorani in the month of May, 1735. Their reception was flattering. Four miserable donkeys formed their equipage, but an immense concourse of people awaited them at the entrance into the barony. The curate with his clerks were there,

and hundreds of men carrying muskets, which they fired off at intervals amidst shouts and exclamations of, "Here comes the holy missionary!" accompanied by clergy and people he proceeded to the parochial church, while the bells rung peals of rejoicing. At the sight of such a multitude he mounted the pulpit, and taking for the subject of his discourse the motive of his coming—the salvation of their souls—he preached with such powerful effect that every heart was penetrated with compunction.

The Baron invited him to his house, but that day he would take no repose ; the sick who were unable to leave their houses sighed for a visit from the servant of God, and overflowing with charity he would not delay gratifying their desire. It was late in the evening before he returned to the Baron's chateau. Next day he received the felicitations of the curates of the neighbouring parishes, and many gentlemen of the country. On the evening of this day he opened the mission. The people ran thither in such crowds that the church, though spacious, could not contain them. At the sight of Alphonso, so poor, so humble, so full of the spirit of God, no one could resist him ; every heart was touched, even the most hardened, and the conversions were innumerable. On all sides voices were raised to bless and thank God for sending those missionaries among them.

The habitation which the Baron had given them, besides a sort of cellar which served for a

kitchen, consisted only of two rooms, larger however than those of Scala. After a while they found themselves so crowded that the Baron gave them two other apartments, but in passing from the one to the other they were obliged to cross an open court, which was a great inconvenience, particularly in winter; besides, these places had only planks for the exterior wall, through the chinks of which the cold wind entered. In addition to this annoyance they were situated above a public-house and a prison, a neighbourhood not exactly fitted for men devoted to prayer and retirement.

On the left side of one of these rooms, Alphonso, with the permission of the Archbishop, erected a small Oratory, reserving the three others for sleeping apartments. The furniture of the whole was miserable enough, and so far from having superfluities, absolute necessities were wanting. He rejoiced in these discomforts, and the others shared in his joy, happy in participating in the sorrows and sufferings of Jesus Christ. Their Oratory was for them a little heaven. It was there during the night, oftener than during the day, Alphonso poured out his soul into the bosom of his God.

He established at Ciorani the same pious practices which were in use at Scala and Villa dei Schiavi. The exercises were inado in the parochial Church, but the concourse of people being as great as on feast days, the missionaries had scarcely time to eat or sleep. They heard confessions from morning till evening, but as the people

came very early in the morning and disturbed the poor old curate, who could get no sleep from the noise, Alphonso was at the expense of repairing the old Church of St. Sophia, annexed to the signorial palace, and met the people there. As all the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages could not come to Ciorani, he sent missionaries on feast days, to the great comfort of the sick and the infirm.

It was not long before the barony of Sarnelli was completely reformed. Ciorani no longer was what it had been, for the inhabitants began to resemble the first Christians, who edified the Church in its infancy. Quarrels and hatreds were banished ; the language and behaviour of the young men became pure ; the young women no longer sung loose and profane songs, but pious canticles which Alphonso composed himself. When the inhabitants met, they saluted each other, saying, "Praise be to Jesus and Mary." The little children were taught by their mothers, and lisped this salutation when they met the priests. No more imprecations were heard in the village ; the public-house was deserted, and all improper games were forbidden. The seeds of salvation sown in this territory -were so abundant that the fruits of them are still to be seen.

While such glorious works were progressing the devil could not look quietly on ; accordingly he set to work by exciting the jealousy of the neighbouring curates, who saw their churches deserted, especially the lukewarm among them, who felt themselves reproached by the fervour

of the Missionaries. They were joined by certain mendicant friars, who were jealous of the alms they received. In short, the multitude of their enemies beset the Archbishop, who began to doubt whether he ought not to suppress the house. But in the end they became quiet, and the Archbishop definitely authorised the foundation on the 12th of December, 1735, to the great satisfaction of the diocese.

Tosquez and Mandarini now began to recognise the pernicious effects of their division, and although they had *got* the approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff for their establishments, they were not very successful, and continually wrote to Alphonso on the subject of a reunion ; he did not see the propriety of such a measure, but gave no decided answer until he had weighed the matter maturely, but at length he wrote a definite answer. “It is true,” he said, “that it promises much, but I doubt whether these promises would ever be realized. First impressions are not easily effaced, and what we retract to-day, we recommence to-morrow, and when the spirit is cooled the fairest promises are forgotten.” Above all, he remembered the advice of the Cardinal Pignatelli against this reunion, and the affair was for ever broken off.

CHAPTER VIII.

From the time the Congregation of Alphonso was established at Ciorani, the neighbouring

parishes felt the effects of his zeal in the number of missions he gave. He visited also populous towns, although his numbers were so small, but their indefatigable zeal supplied the deficiency. One mission was sufficient to produce a thorough reformation of morals ; restitutions were made, enmities abolished, and the people said the sight of him alone was sufficient to excite compunction.

The Archbishop of Salerno, struck by the good which was done, and the very small expense necessary to lodge such missionaries, since they were content with a morsel of bread and a corner in the sacristy, gave Alphonso license to go where he would, commanding the curates, at the same time, to show them every respect and attention. The greater number were eager to have them, and Alphonso had difficulty in accepting the numerous invitations ; but there were others who received them with a very ill grace, and even repulsed them. On one occasion he had fixed the day for giving a mission in a parish ; on his arrival the curate met him, and without asking him to dismount from his ass, refused to permit him ; but beginning to fear the anger of the Archbishop, he tried to palliate his conduct, by mentioning a future period when the mission might be held. Alphonso showed no discontent, but calmly answered, “Your Reverence believes the mission can be held at that time ; but I assure you you will not be in a condition to receive me then. The curate did not understand these words, but before the time

appointed, although in the prime of life, he had paid the debt of nature.

As we have already seen the miserable accommodation they had at Ciorani. Scarcely were they settled, however, when the people saw with regret the inconveniences of their habitation, and all wished to commence building a new one, at whatever cost to themselves. The Baron gave up to them a building in another part of his property, which he had destined for a different purpose, and added some ground for a garden. No sooner was this done than men and women came from all quarters to assist. Some carried stones and wood, others constructed a furnace to make bricks, and the sons of the Baron, with the curate and the priests, laboured as hard as the people. The building advanced as if by enchantment, and every one admired how the people, ignorant in such works, nevertheless laboured as skilfully as if they had been masters; they appreciated the anxiety of Alphonso for their immortal souls, and would return zeal for zeal. Even on feast days they worked hard with the permission of the Archbishop, and on these occasions they were joined by regular workmen from all quarters.

One may say that the practice of holy exercises was brought to perfection at Ciorani; for in spite of the annoyances of the locality in which they dwelt, many persons, both priests and lay-men, came to place themselves under the direction of Alphonso. The renown of his virtues spread everywhere. Many persons of

quality belonging to St. Severino and the neighbourhood, seeing the effect produced upon others, ardently desired to have a species of mission for themselves ; he agreed to their wishes, and as the Baron Angelo was then in Naples, he obtained permission to give the mission in the great hall of the castle, and also that those gentlemen who were too far distant from home should remain all night. Many ecclesiastics assisted at this mission, and the fruits were seen in their redoubled ardour for the souls of men ; while the gentlemen returned home to edify all by the reformation of their lives and manners.

The young priest, Andrew Viliam, was among the number, a descendant of the Dukes of Sacco della Polla. Convinced by meditating on eternal truths that the world is deceitful and full of snares, he took the resolution of quitting it and consecrating himself to God in this new Congregation. Alphonso rejoiced in the acquisition of such a subject ; but to remove him from his family, he sent him to the Villa to make his novitiate. He afterwards became a model of sanctity and a foundation-stone in the new-born Congregation.

Alphonso took every care to make the people love holy exercises, and all rejoiced in the good they produced. Many ecclesiastics came during the year, but chiefly in Lent, to make retreats, and magistrates, nobles, and princes came also, besides many prelates with their clerks. Alphonso attached the greatest importance to the holy exercises of a retreat for all conditions of men,

and tho fruits which always accompany them prove his wisdom. To tho day of his death he never ceased to urge their importance and necessity.

Tho house at Ciorani was prospering miraculously, when the devil again assailed it. Profiting by the injudicious zeal of F. Sarnelli, who, in his anxiety for tho support of the Congregation, suggested to tho Archbishop, that as so many curates profited by tho labours of tho missionaries, each should contribute a trifle towards their support. Nothing more was necessary to excite a hue and cry. Tho curates keenly opposed tho measure, and not only did they look upon Alphonso with an evil eye, but they set themselves by all means to have tho Congregation chased out of tho territory. The curate of Ciorani was asked to lend his aid, but the good old man replied, “What! these holy priests who labour incessantly in my parish; would you have me deprive my people of such great help!” Unsuccessful in this quarter, their enemies reported to the Archbishop of Salerno, that under pretence of zeal and devotedness they only sought to enrich themselves at the expense of the legitimate pastors, and that they ought to be immediately expelled from the diocese. Tho Archbishop smiled at this, and said, “I know Alphonso de Liguori; he and I resemble each other in reference to fortune; I know he has quitted the world not from necessity, but from choice, and that if he has any anxiety it is not about temporal interests, but to gain souls and secure his

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own salvation." On this occasion the inhabitants of Ciorani showed their affection for Alphonso and his companions. As soon as they heard of the complaints made against them, they sent a deputation to the Archbishop to vouch for the zeal and disinterestedness of the good missionaries. The prelate was much annoyed by the outcry of the curates, and declared that he took the missionaries under his own immediate protection, as the work to which they had devoted themselves was most advantageous to the souls confided to his care. This storm having abated, the curates who were most opposed to Alphonso were the first to profit by his labours ; he made missions in the different parishes, and the fruits of his zeal were abundant as ever. That the good done might be lasting, he never failed to inculcate and establish different pious practices, such as frequenting the Sacraments, visits to the Blessed Sacrament and to our Blessed Lady.

In the course of the retreats which he gave about this time, a striking event occurred to prove how God watched over him and protected him. Speaking of the enormity of sin in priests, because of the greater light they received than others, he concluded by quoting the words of St. John Chrysostom, "In sacerdotio peccasti, periisti." At these words a bold ecclesiastic replied, to the great scandal of all who heard him, "Nego consequentiam." This miserable man soon experienced the consequence : next morning, when he approached the altar to say mass, as he began the Psalm, "Judica me, Deus," he dropped down dead.

CHAPTER IX.

After having given numerous missions in the course of the year 1737, Alphonso, at the pressing entreaty of the Superior of the Propaganda, went to Naples for the mission to be opened in the Church of the Holy Spirit, on the 26th of October. They were so anxious to have him, that in the fear of his refusing because of the contradictions and vexations he had endured at their hands, they addressed themselves to Mgr. Falcoja, his director. It has been said, that a volume might be filled with the conversions he made on this occasion. This mission cost him much trouble, but he did not grudge it, and when it was finished, instead of taking some repose, he proceeded immediately to visit Ainalfi. The recollection of the good he performed still remains. He found at Masini a poor woman whose son had been most cruelly assassinated. The most influential persons had besought her to pardon the murderer, but she constantly refused. She went to hear Alphonso preach, and was so touched by the sermon, that the same evening she brought to the church a written declaration that she pardoned the criminal, and publicly laid it at the foot of the crucifix. Throughout the neighbourhood he gave missions, which reclaimed multitudes of sinners, and impelled the virtuous to strive after a higher degree of sanctity.

At this time he was called by Mgr. de Liguori, his uncle, to St. Lucy, in the diocese of Cava. The inhabitants were very immoral in their lives, and in great want of spiritual assistance. But "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Abuses were extirpated; nothing was spoken of but pardoning injuries, making restitutions, and repairing scandals: and so well did he convince them of the merit of chastity, that he filled the young with love for this virtue, and upwards of fifty young ladies protested they would no longer think of marriage, but would consecrate themselves to God. They carried their resolve into execution, and united themselves into a Congregation under the direction of a zealous priest: they were soon joined by many others attracted by their noble example.

The Bishop of Cajazzo was rejoicing in the blessings dispersed through his diocese by means of Alphonso and his missionaries from their establishment at the Villa. The buildings were nearly finished, and they had already begun to give retreats. The house was filled with priests and young candidates for the ministry, whom Alphonso directed in the way of the Lord. His companions were visiting the country around, extirpating sin and planting virtue. A Congregation of artisans had been established, which already numbered more than two hundred brothers, whose zeal and fervour made them missionaries throughout the neighbourhood. The frequentation of the Sacraments became general, and many individuals were arriving at a high

degree of prayer. Tho Bishop's joy was at its height, when all at onco a storm arose which overthrew his hopes, withering those blossoms which promised such abundant fruits for eternity.

There were in tho country certain individuals who could not enduro to have their vices censured, among others a man who led a life openly immoral ; and not enduring to have his conduct animadverted upon, and doubtless instigated by tho devil, ho conspired tho ruin of the missionaries. All the wealth of this house, as wo have already seen, consisted of four miserable chaplainships, which brought each ono carlino a-day ; under pretext of defending tho interests of the priests of tho country, this man began to exclaim aloud against tho missionaries for coming thither to cat tho bread belonging to tho inhabitants, and getting money by extra masses, a source of profit to which tho legitimate pastors had the right. Pecuniary interest being thus brought into play, tho clergy with their relations and friends were excited, tho clamour became general, and tho most gross and injurious expressions were employed against them. Tho calumnies augmented, and at length their morals were attacked. They were described as so many hypocrites, whose preaching and lives were at variance. Tho Father Liguori himself was pointed out as ono who made a traffic of his pretended sanctity. But the iniquity did not stop here : they went so far as to say that tho missionaries intrigued with a woman whom they pointed out, and received her into tho convent by night ;

and this wretched creature lent herself to the calumny, defaming Alphonso even more than the others, and showing presents which she pretended to have received from them. These calumnies made little impression upon him ; he knew persecution always accompanied works undertaken for God ; he contented himself with prescribing to the community still more circumspection in their conduct, and more frequent recurrence to penitence and prayer. The wicked man and his accomplices, after having filled all hearts with gloomy doubts, at last succeeded in prejudicing the Baron himself. When Alphonso saw the storm increasing he feared an explosion, and went to the Baron to claim his protection ; but it was too late, his mind was already poisoned ; and as soon as he saw him approach he permitted these words to escape : “ What have we here, one of those filthy hermits ? ” and immediately dismissed him with still greater contempt.

This scene was soon reported, and filled the enemies of Alphonso with joy, making them redouble their efforts to expel him and his companions. They now no longer confined themselves to outrageous words ; they took bolder steps, and solicited the tribunals of Naples to interfere in different ways, but could gain nothing there, Alphonso and his companions being too well known. They at last had recourse to violence. One of the lay-brothers going in the morning to the church to sound the Angelus, was met by one of the wardens, accompanied

by several people ; they forced the keys from his hands, locked the church, and sent him back to the house loaded with reproaches. But fearing the people might take part with the missionaries and force open the door, they placed persons with loaded muskets on the belfry, to prevent approach. Their rage increasing they besieged the house, and without exception interdicted all communication with those within. This situation becoming every day less endurable, their friends at Naples advised them to abandon the Villa. This determination being taken, the Bishop wept with regret, the poor people were not less disconsolate, and the surrounding villages were in mourning. On the night of the 10th of Juno, 1737, the missionaries shook the dust from their shoes, and left the Villa to return to Cajazzo and say farewell to the Bishop, a parting accompanied by many tears.

God did not permit this wickedness to pass unpunished. The wretched woman who had accused Alphonso and his companions, had her tongue eaten by worms, and was reduced to such a condition that she could not receive the Sacraments : she was seized with the most dreadful remorse of conscience for her horrible calumnies, and publicly avowed all she had said was but an infamous invention. Nicolas Masucci, a layman had joined in the conspiracy, died soon after in despair uttering the most frightful cries. John Baptiste Riccardi, one of the principal persecutors, terminated his life in the most terrible convulsions, and howling like a maniac. Peter Isolda,

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Who had sought out the false witnesses and written down their testimony, had his hand withered, and his only son died soon after ; he then became an idiot and expired in great misery. Another healthy young man, Peter Taotillo, fell down dead immediately after the departure of Alphonso ; and a certain Anthony Masello, who, for a sack of grain which our chief persecutor, Carmen Festa, had promised him, attested all the calumnies, died in impenitence. Not one of those who had a hand in the persecution of the missionaries escaped the Divine Justice. One only seemed for the moment to have escaped, as if God in His mercy would leave him more time to repent because he was the most guilty. Carmen Festa, that wicked man whose scandalous life and corrupt soul had produced all these evils, remained deaf to a warning sent him by Heaven. Scarcely had the missionaries quitted the Villa, when a tremendous storm arose ; the lightning flashed, and a thunderbolt fell at the feet of this man as he sat in his room ; it stunned him, and for some little time he remained without sense or motion. When he came to himself he would not recognise the warning ; before long he fell into disgrace with his prince, was ill used and persecuted, and within a year after the departure of Alphonso he was found one morning lying dead under his bed and bathed in blood.

CHAPTER X.

A vast field now presented itself for the labours of Alphonso ; he gave missions throughout the country ; everywhere reaping the most abundant harvest. It was in the Barony of St. George's, at the little village of Ajillo, that God poured out the most extraordinary graces. Scandals disappeared, taverns were deserted, and churches filled. Here he established as usual many devotional practices, and there was not a house where they did not say the Rosary. The ecclesiastics felt the benefit of this mission, to which many among them owed their conversion.

It was at this place the Blessed Virgin was pleased to give a public testimony of her love for Alphonso. What had happened at Scala in the secret of the grotto, was repeated in presence of an assembled multitude. One evening while he was preaching on the glories of Mary, and exciting the people to honour her, he was ravished in ecstasy and raised some palms from the pulpit ; at the same time, rays of glory proceeded from a statue of the Virgin and rested on the head of her chosen servant. It may be imagined in what esteem the people held his sanctity, after a grace so distinguished, and how deeply his words must have penetrated their hearts.

So many Bishops having already profited by

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his labours, it was but just Mgr. Falcoja should have his share. Ho accordingly visited Castellamare, a town which was in great want of spiritual succour, its maritime commerce bringing strangers from all parts, which necessarily corrupted morals. He took with him nine companions, and remained long, because of tho great necessity of tho people. Multitudes were converted, among whom were many unfortunate women. Smuggling was discouraged, and the magical practices in use among the sailors were abolished. Tho whole town breathed an air of devotion, tho churches were crowded, and tho Sacraments frequented.

Tho now house of Ciorani was not long in being built, thanks to the care of F. Rossi, and the inhabitants who had it so much at heart. Every ono thought tho rapidity with which it had been erected quite miraculous ; but the F. Sportelli remarked, that the greatest miracle was to sec it standing and not falling to the ground, considering how it had been got up.

As soon as it was finished, and tho small church erected, they abandoned that of St. Sophia, but in this as in everything else belonging to them, poverty predominated. Devotion and piety, however, were its ornaments. It was dedicated to tho Blessed Virgin, and in it Alphonso placed that beloved statue of her which had been his companion in those retreats ho made at Naples in tho house of D. de Alteriis. He also, with the permission of the Archbishop, arranged a chapel, spacious but poor, in which to give

retreats to the candidates for ordination, and the numerous ecclesiastics and laymen who usually assisted on such occasions. The convenience offered by the new house drew strangers there at all times, especially in general missions, so that Alphonso and his companions had often to sleep on the floor, in an apartment where the oven stood.

The number of penitents who flocked to Ciorani was so great, that on the death of the Bishop, the Archdeacon D. Francis de Vicariis who succeeded him in March, 1738, named Alphonso Grand Penitentiary of the Arch-diocese. The great concourse of visitors proved that the choice made was due to the sanctity of the individual. Rejoicing at their establishment in this house, Alphonso exerted himself to make the rules be strictly observed, for the inconveniences of the former habitations had made this impossible. The deserts of Nubia and Thebes, perhaps never counted among their cenobites contemplatives such as were to be seen in the house of Ciorani. A superfluous word was never heard, and no one left his chamber without necessity ; all breathed humility and perfect obedience. The will of Alphonso was the rule of the others ; without pretension, without repugnance, and without envy, each was content with his office. The Holy Sacrament was continually exposed in the church, and every one was anxious to be permitted to pay his court to the King of kings, not only during the day, but during the night, and for as long a time as possible. Penitence

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and mortification. And the two virtues to which they attached themselves most. If there were brothers who did not excel, the example of their Superior and model drew them after him in spite of themselves.

If on his part Alphonso was doing all in his power to establish the Congregation, the devil was as busy in attempting to destroy it. Until then they had had no house at Scala, but were considered as strangers. Alphonso, in concert with the bishop, thought of erecting one, but scarcely had they put their hand to the work when a general commotion ensued. Several priests at Scala having learned what happened at the Villa, began in their turn to murmur and put forward the motive of the masses. When envy had entered into their hearts, jealousy, excited by interest, made them regard the missionaries with feelings of bitterness. Alphonso, warned by what had happened at the Villa, wished to shun new misfortunes, and without loss of time removed from Scala. This was a blow deeply felt by Mgr. Santoro. The good lamented, but the envious triumphed, when on the eve of St. Bartholomew, the 23rd of August, 1738, they left the town. This victory was a grand feast for the powers of darkness. On the night when they departed from Scala, there was heard throughout the town the noise made by evil spirits shouting and dancing. They celebrated a great victory, for the departure of the missionaries arrested the good that was doing; for to the scandals that had

once been so common, had succeeded a horror of sin ; even the porters had been reformed, often approaching the holy table, and frequently might be met in groups carrying their burdens and reciting the rosary, or singing the hymns Alphonso had taught them. Such were the effects produced by the residence of these missionaries. Two years after the Congregation of Pious Workers went to preach a mission there, when one of them, D. Andrew Amodie, declared, that they had not found among the people one voluntary venial sin, and all sorts of pious practices they had found already established. The inhabitants of Scala were not long in feeling the Divine wrath, in punishment of the wickedness of those who had forced the missionaries to retire, and the weakness of the greater number who had not opposed it. They had left on the 23rd of August, and on the 28th a violent storm destroyed the harvest, which in that country consists of chesnuts, on which the poor chiefly live. But Alphonso did not forget Scala ; he sent some of his companions to give the Novena of the Crucifix, that the nuns might not be deprived of their religious exercises.

The fields in which Alphonso laboured during the following autumn and winter were not less fertile in the fruits of salvation. He preached

penance in many districts, and at Castiglione the concourse of people was so great, that they passed the night in the church in order to hear him preach in the morning. The same thing occurred at Coperchia, near Salerno. The year 1739 was opened by a mission in the village of Prepezzano. The name of Alphonso had become so celebrated in the diocese of Salerno, and such wonders of grace were operated by him, that persons frequently came a distance of seventeen miles to confess to him. After having celebrated the feast of Easter at Ciorani, he again began his labours in the country. At Gifoni the people came in such crowds that he preached to several thousand persons. Invited afterwards by the curates of the territory of Calvanico, he went to console the people and give a retreat to the priests, when some among them were so animated with fervour, that they followed in his suite to assist at the missions, a practice which is now not unfrequent.

To give a little relaxation to a body overpowered with fatigue, and refresh himself by retreat, he returned with his companions during the summer to the house at Ciorani, to renew his strength and issue forth with redoubled vigour to attack the strongholds of Satan. He began his next mission at Coperchia, a rich and populous village near Salerno. Here he set himself to oppose the evils which result from commerce ; he pointed out the rules which ought to regulate contracts ; he corrected many abuses, and abolished customs contrary to equity ; he established here as else-

where the devotion of the Way of the Cross, meditation in common every morning in the church, the fréquentation of the Sacraments, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and a visit every evening to the Blessed Sacrament.

In the beginning of 1740, accompanied by eleven missionaries, he overran the country, shedding the benedictions of Heaven on many villages where great disorder had previously reigned. Having terminated the spring missions he returned again to Ciorani, to regulate the affairs of the Congregation, and reanimate them by his example in the observation of the rules.

The country of St. Severino suffered during the summer of this year from a great drought, which threatened to ruin the harvest and destroy the fruit-trees. To obtain the Divine Mercy in this emergency, the inhabitants of Acquarola invited Alphonso to give a mission towards the end of the month of July ; their fervour was great during these exercises, and one day Alphonso foretold that at a time specified abundance of rain would fall. The day came without any appearance of rain, when all at once a very small cloud was seen above Salerno. When Alphonso saw it, he extended his arms as if to invite its approach, and then prostrating himself on the earth he besought the Divine Mercy in behalf of the people. No sooner had he fallen on his knees when the air was obscured by clouds, thunder was heard, the lightning flashed, and during five hours the rain fell in torrents. The

joy was universal, and all the neighbourhood united in returning thanks to God.

In the autumn he again gave missions in many villages with his usual success. In the beginning of 1741 he gave a mission for the second time at Solofra, and converted some thousands who on a former occasion had resisted grace. Among these numerous conversions were bandits and murderers. Many priests who had been cold and indifferent gave themselves fervently to God, a circumstance which always rejoiced Alphonso, who used to say, "The conversion of a priest gives more glory to God than that of a hundred seculars. No layman, however holy, can perform the good done by a priest."

He had the consolation of finding the nuns of two monasteries he had formerly visited in the same fervour in which he had left them. He failed not to confirm them more and more in loving to observe their rule in all its strictness, in detachment from persons without, in the love of prayer, in recollection, and above all in frequenting the Sacraments, and devotion to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and the Blessed Virgin.

The town of Nocera was too near Ciorani to remain ignorant of the miracles of grace operated by Alphonso. A zealous priest who resided there used to frequent Ciorani, and in consequence resolved if possible to have a house established at Nocera. He was instigated to this by knowing that the Dean of Nocera had resolved to endow a house of missionaries, and had

already applied to the Fathers of St. Vincent of Paul. He spoke to the Dean and the principal inhabitants of the virtues of Alphonso and his companions, and arranged that they should give a mission there. It had the greatest success ; numerous conversions were made among all classes, ecclesiastics as well as seculars, and every one designated Alphonso “the Apostle.”

He certainly enjoyed many supernatural gifts: he knew how to touch all hearts ; he had the spirit of prophecy and the gift of healing, often curing fevers and other diseases by making the sign of the cross. He lodged in the house of the priest who had been the cause of his coming, whose mother was subject to convulsions from an excessive pain she had in her arm. She wrapped herself in a shirt belonging to Alphonso, full of faith in his sanctity, and was immediately cured. All this made the people more than ever anxious to have them. Flans were formed, but the designs of Providence were not accomplished until a later period.

After this mission they went to the territory of St. Egidio, where the people were reformed, and the clergy excited to greater zeal. One of them, a priest of great talent, entered the Congregation. It was on the 18th of April in this year that God called to himself the first member of the Congregation. He was a lay-brother, Joachim Gaudiello ; he died in transports of joy, exclaiming, “ It is I who carry the standard ! ” All the virtues seemed to have taken up their

abode in this excellent subject. They had neglected to take his portrait, and eleven days after his death, in the hope that his body was still uncorrupted, they opened the coffin, and found their expectations justified: his body was flexible and entire, as if still alive.

CHAPTER XII.

Providence had destined a new field for Alphonso to cultivate in the spring of 1741. His Eminence, Cardinal Spinelli, having become Archbishop of Naples, by the death of the Cardinal Pignatelli, and knowing the good done by Alphonso in other parts of the kingdom, would have him to supply the great necessities of his own diocese. He at first excused himself by saying that the diocese of Naples was much better supplied with priests, than the countries in which he laboured, but although this could not be denied, the Cardinal persisted in claiming his services, so that at last he was obliged to yield; for the country of his birth had certainly a powerful claim upon him.

That his other missions might suffer as little as possible, he only took from his own Congregation the fathers Sarnelli and Villani, but with the approbation of the Cardinal he chose the elite of all the Congregations in Naples to assist him, and above all, the best missionaries of the Propaganda. The Cardinal wished it should

bo so, in order that tho others might learn from him to conduct missions with more success. He placed at his disposal a country house in the Barra, to which the missionaries might retire to recruit after their fatigues. Alphonso had two sacrifices to make on this occasion ; ho had to withdraw from many villages and hamlets remote from Naples, which stood in need of all his cares, and also to see himself placed at tho head of many distinguished missionaries, above all, those of tho Propaganda, of which he was but a simple member, and from which he so lately had been on the point of being expelled.

The Superior of tho Propaganda was exceedingly annoyed at Alphonso being placed at tho head ; he affirmed that his Congregation enjoyed a pre-eminence over all the Congregations in tho kingdom, and that to him belonged the right of deciding on who should bo tho chief ; but tho true motive of this opposition, was the unwillingness of the members of the Propaganda to submit themselves to a man whom they had wished to expel. When they complained to the Cardinal, he replied, “I am your Archbishop, I am also Superior of the Missions, as well as all other Congregations in the diocese, and since the missions depend on me, I am tho person to appoint the chief.”

It was in tho month of May these missions commenced at I-ragola, where he opened three at once in the three parochial churches. lie established the practice of prayer in the church

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morning and evening ; visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin ; the protestation for a good death once a month, with exposition of the Holy Sacrament ; and in order to render the priests more skilful in the confessional, he instituted conferences to be held every eight days, in which were agitated and discussed different cases of conscience. He established the Way of the Cross in each parish, and exhorted the faithful to the practice of this devotion, particularly on Fridays, in memory of the sufferings of our Lord.

When the exercises in these three parishes were finished, he went with his companions to Casai Nuovo : the mission there lasted till the middle of June. When the heats of the summer became too great he dismissed the Neapolitan missionaries, and remained with his own at St. Agnello, where they continued to preach and hear the confessions of crowds who came from all quarters. On feast days he went himself with his brethren into the neighbouring hamlets, exhorting the people to penance. On these missions they followed the same rules which had been established for the interior of the Congregation. The only food permitted consisted in soup and vegetables. Alphonso held the maxim that the people would rather be gained by example than by words. He would have only the cheapest fish, and no fowls, game, or pastry ; and when they wished to supply his table with rare dishes, he sent them away,

although his guests were often Canons from Naples and other persons of distinction.

At Christmas they expected some relaxation in these rules, but they were mistaken. Certain persons attached to the service of the Cardinal, who had dined there on Christmas day, said to him on their return, “Your Eminence is perhaps not aware that Alphonso gave us a treat on Christmas ; he made them serve several additional forcemeat balls on that occasion, at the risk of ruining his household economy.” Alphonso in his missions was willing to have what was necessary, but he had a horror of superfluity. He allowed the other missionaries to travel in a carriage, because they were not accustomed to do otherwise ; but he and his brethren would only make use of an ass.

For a long time the priest Paul Cafaro, then Curate of St. Peter at Cava, had wished to join the Congregation. Alphonso met him at Barra ; when urged by the good he saw done he hesitated no longer, and became one of its principal columns. Mgr. Liguori, his uncle, was as much annoyed by this as Alphonso was glad, and would no longer have the missionaries in his diocese. Cafaro was received as novice in October, 1741, but nevertheless he was employed in different works in the parish, and even taken on the mission. In the beginning of November, the missionaries again met, and commenced their pious labours. Although in the service of Mgr. Spinelli, Alphonso could not refuse going to Nocera dei Pagani during the Holy Week of

1742, to give the exercises in honour of the Holy Sacrament in the great church of Corpus Christi. The effects were most consoling, and Contaldi began to stir himself in carrying his plan into execution of having the order established there. But it was still delayed.

CHAPTER XIII.

While Alphonso was devoting himself with so much zeal to the diocese of Naples, he did not forget that of Salerno. Father Sportella went with others to the different parishes, giving missions, which were attended with wonderful success. The Cardinal Archbishop, considering the abundant blessings Alphonso and his missionaries produced, proposed to establish them in the Barra situated in the centre of his diocese. But this was far from according with the views of Alphonso, as he explained to his Eminence : “When my missionaries,” said he, “will be settled at Barra, and have ladies and gentlemen for their penitents, will they be very willing to leave this place for the hamlets and the mountains ? and who knows but, fascinated by their noble penitents, they may fix themselves at *Naples for the greater part of the year.*” he continued, “Your Eminence is in no want of able workmen at Naples to employ in the care of your diocese, but other bishops have not this advantage ; it is not from Naples we can draw missionaries for

villages and remote hamlets.” Tho Cardinal was persuaded, and no longer insisted on this foundation.

During the Octave of Easter ho again began the missions in tho country, and during tho month of May, 1742, besides spiritual exercises, he gave more than twenty missions. An eyewitness speaking of the effects of his labours says, “ Were I to report all the facts in particular, they would fill volumes. In the diocese of Naples the Father don Alphonso banished scandals and abuses without number. No more indecencies were committed in tho churches ; women no longer dressed in a manner to give scandal, and occasion the weak to sin. Young girls who were before ignorant even of the name of modesty, henceforth conducted themselves with becoming reserve ; taverns were no longer frequented, certain dances and pastimes formerly in use were abolished ; pious canticles replaced tho licentious songs so common during the harvest and vintage.” Such were the happy results of the missions given by Alphonso. Every one admired the Avisdom by which he made vice bo detested. His zeal resembled a fire, which increases and propagates itself in spite of all obstacles, and his desire to save souls was so great, that he never put off till to-morrow the good he could perform to-day.

If Alphonso operated wonders on tho morals of the people, it was duo to his extraordinary labours and fatigues ; his body and his mind were continually in action ; no one could understand

how he managed to do what would have overpowered any one else ; people said he lived by miracle. He always reserved for himself the evening sermon, unless he was greatly fatigued, and he often preached twice, sometimes three times in one day ; but he preached even more by his example. He ate little ; we have already seen the nature of his meals, and he never changed. The time he gave to sleep was short indeed. In his long journeys, and during the exercises of a mission, whatever his fatigue might be, he never lessened his bodily austerities, never gave himself the least solace, although he permitted his companions to take some care of themselves. He always travelled on an ass, and those who did not know him, seeing a man of poor exterior, often mistook him for the domestic. One day when he preached at the opening of a mission, the peasants, struck by the beautiful words they heard, said to each other, “Well, if the cook can preach in that manner, what will it be when the others begin!”

But all that has been said can give but a faint idea of what Alphonso did on mission. He always reserved for himself the worst bed and most incommodious chamber. Every thing came well to him, provided he were mortified and humiliated. At Casai Nuovo he gave up to his companions the only three rooms that could be had, and kept for himself a miserable ruin long uninhabited ; the spot is still pointed out as having once accommodated the Father Liguori.

When the heats of summer had increased, and

tho harvest time was near at hand, Alphonso thought it best to confirm tho good already done by tho missions before beginning now. lie therefore sent his missionaries in small numbers, and for a few days only, to those places where missions had already been given. These renewals of missions produced much fruit. They reanimated the fervour of the confraternities they had established, confirmed tho people in their pious practices, raised those who had fallen, and encouraged those who persevered. During this summer lie laboured incessantly to promote devotion to the Mother of God, giving retreats for nine days preceding any of her feasts, lie was the originator of tho Novenas now so common in Naples, and which continue to produce such benefit to tho souls of all who engage in them. After terminating his labours in the Barra, ho returned in tho beginning of July for a short time to Ciorani.

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CHAPTER XIV.

Hit h e r t o Alphonso and his Congregation had lived together without binding themselves by vows : but as nature modifies and brings her fruits to perfection by slow degrees, so ho insensibly disposed his companions for a life more perfect and more holy. Although they had lived until then in the true spirit of poverty and blind obedience, so that the distinctions of meum and

tuum were unknown, yet they had never taken any engagement to prevent them changing their mode of life. All was free and spontaneous ; but considering that in a society the spirit of religion decays rather than increases, Alphonso determined to retain and fix the spirit of piety by vows, and form his Congregation into an apostolic community. He urged upon his companions the merit they would acquire before God when they had by solemn vows sacrificed their own will, and despoiled themselves of worldly wealth. “ The renouncement of our own will,” he said, “procures more glory to God than all the good works we could do from our own choice. A delicious fruit gives pleasure to him to whom we present it ; but if, with the fruit we give the tree that produces it, the offering acquires an infinitely greater value. Without vows, we can give God the fruit ; but with vows, we give both the tree and the fruit.” He deplored the inconsistency of some who from excessive attachment to their relations or imaginary love of liberty, withdrew from the Congregation and re-entered the world, “ The vow,” he said, “will be as a buckler in the hand of the religious against the devil and his own inconstancy it will confirm him in his vocation to the service of God ; it will be to him as an anchor to preserve his vessel beaten and tossed by the winds.”

The fathers Sportelli, Mazzini, Sarnelli, Rossi, Villani, and Cafaro, were regarded as the foundations on which the Congregation was built, not only because they were the first who had

joined the Congregation, but also because of their singular merit. They needed no importunities to induce them to make the generous sacrifice; on the contrary, they never ceased to urge Alphonso to put it in execution. All of them were inclined, but the decision was hastened in consequence of the withdrawal of Father Charles Majorino.

He was a zealous priest, and a man of great virtue, but he was drawn aside by an excess of tenderness towards his relations. One day during prayer he had not the courage to resist the temptation, and to the regret of all he quitted his post without ever acquainting Alphonso, and returned to his home. He soon recognized his error, but had not the courage to repair it.

The measure being resolved upon, Alphonso thought only of the engagements by which his Congregation should be bound. It was determined that each in preserving his wealth, should renounce the temporary use of it in favour of his relations; and in cases where they did not require it, the revenue should be placed at the disposal of the Superiors. By this means if he did not strike so deeply at the root as Tosquez wished to do at Scala, he yet retrenched the branches of that cupidity whose shadow chokes the heart and deprives it of the salutary inspirations of God. This engagement prevented the effects of ambition also, that pernicious passion instigating each one to make himself great, however little he may be. He determined that they should bind themselves to accept no ecclesias-

tical dignity, no title, employment, or benefice out of the Congregation ; and that they should refuse everything of the kind unless commanded by the Pope, or the Superior of the Congregation, lie thus hindered ambitious spirits from entering. lie wished that all the members should have but one heart and one soul, rejecting all private interest, however small it might be, and that the ancient concord of the first Christians should again be seen among them. lie prescribed a life in common, without distinction of merit or rank, in order to unite them closely in God, and bind them together by the disinterested ties of charity.

After having by these rules banished interest and cupidity, he desired above all to unite hearts by the vow of obedience to the will of one Superior. lie believed this virtue of obedience to be the guarantee for the existence of a religious house. “ When obedience and subordination are wanting,” he used to say, “ a true religious cannot live ; and what would have been made a Paradise by concord, becomes a hell by diversity of feeling and sentiment.” He therefore ordained that there should be no will but that of the Superior, and that in his Congregation reply and excuse should be unknown. He exacted from all the formal and unhesitating consent to be ready to help the abandoned in the most remote villages and hamlets, and a sincere disposition to proceed without delay to whatever place the Superior ordained.

Having also in view the conversion of the

heathen, he wished that the members of his Congregation, when they attained the age of thirty, should take a vow to depart on missions to the heathen whenever the Sovereign Pontiff or their Superior commanded them. He established, by unanimous consent, that every one, on the termination of his novitiate, should take the vow of living and dying in the Congregation ; but in case of a sufficient cause to act otherwise, dispensation could be obtained only from the Sovereign Pontiff or the Superior, whilst the Congregation would be always free to send away any one whose conduct was not edifying. “The apostolic life which we embrace,” he said, “consists properly in a solemn adieu to our country and our friends ; for where flesh and blood dominate there can be neither love for God nor zeal for souls. We ought to give ourselves to God, but with a will resolute never to forsake Him. We cannot say that man is fit for the kingdom of God, who, having put his hand to the plough, turns back, allowing thoughts of the past to return into his heart, and according to his caprice turning his back on God and the Congregation.”

Always distrusting his own light, he recurred frequently to God, and consulted with many pious persons, above all, Mgr. Falcoja. All approved of the plan submitted to their consideration ; and at length it was resolved to proceed to the profession on the day of St. Mary Magdalene, the kitchenier Sportelli having a great devotion to that Saint. Before approaching the altar

they desired to offer themselves as a holocaust ; for three days previous they were in retreat and constant prayer, observing the most rigorous silence. At the end of that time they reappeared, breathing only divine love and contempt for themselves and the world. On the 22nd of July, 1742, the day dedicated to this holy penitent, they met in the chapel of the house of Ciorani. Alphonso gave them a fervent exhortation ; then invoking the aid of the Holy Spirit, he implored the assistance of the Saint whom he had chosen for the patron of the Congregation; they then all pronounced the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and perseverance. As the Institute was not yet confirmed by the Pope, and Alphonso had no legitimate character of Superior, they agreed to make their vow of perseverance to Mgr. Falcoja, in his quality of Bishop, as he took such a deep interest in the Congregation. Sarnelli alone was absent on this occasion, being in Naples on urgent business with the Cardinal Spinelli. The joy was unanimous, and Alphonso, after having returned thanks to God and animated his brethren to be faithful, departed with Father Viliam for the Barra.

CHAPTER XV.

Although Alphonso saw the great good which resulted from his missions in the diocese of Naples, and the extreme satisfaction of the Cardinal,

it was yet with regret that he laboured there, he thought continually of the want to which so many other places were abandoned, reflecting that the good could be as easily done by the numerous zealous and pious missionaries the Cardinal had at his own disposal. He prayed, he disciplined his body, in order to know the will of God. Unhappy as he was on this subject, he would not displease the Archbishop, yet it was impossible to remain much longer in his present position. He applied to the Canon James Fontana, a man of much merit, who had great influence with the Cardinal, and explained to him his anxieties on the subject, requesting he would speak with his Eminence, and if possible obtain his consent to withdraw from these missions. Fontana acquiesced in all his views, and promised to do all he could. While Alphonso redoubled his prayers and penances, that God might restore him to his beloved house of Ciorani, he wrote to them there to join with him in prayer, and to recommend him continually to God in the holy sacrifice of the mass, that he might be delivered from Naples.

The attempt of the Canon did not at first succeed; the Cardinal was much annoyed, and declared that if Alphonso left him he would discontinue the missions altogether. This vexed him exceedingly; he could neither endure that the missions should be stopped, nor that the Cardinal should be displeased with the Congregation. Fontana persisted however, and in the end persuaded the Cardinal that the missions

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could be carried on successfully without Alphonso, the priest, Matthew Tista, being admirably fitted to conduct them. But it was only on condition that the Father Sarnelli should be left to superintend them, that he at last consented to part with Alphonso. This arrangement being made, Father Sarnelli remained at Naples until 1748.

Alphonso took leave of the Archbishop on the 3rd of July. Mounted on a sorry mule, he traversed the streets of Naples with Father Villani, and alighted at the gate of the archiepiscopal palace ; some were edified by his humility, while others mocked at him and laughed, he placed himself in an obscure corner of the anteroom, which was filled with gentlemen and dignified ecclesiastics. In a few minutes the Cardinal came out, and without noticing any of the others went straight to Alphonso, took him by the hand and led him into his chamber. he spoke of the missions, the good they had produced, and thanked him for the zeal he had shown in the cause. He begged his advice regarding all that could be useful to the people, and testified the greatest regret at losing him. Alphonso on his part thanked him for the favours he had received, and begged his continued protection for the Congregation. He then proceeded to Barra, where he had promised to make the Novena of the Assumption, and afterwards accompanied by Father Villani returned to Ciorani.

The projects of the Dean of Nocera now began to take effect. *Clergy and* laity were equally desirous to have the Congregation established

there, and the Bishop, Mgr. Dominicis, sighed for the day of their arrival. When all was arranged, Alphonso went accompanied by F. Sportelli. Tho Dean Contaldi gave tho house and furniture, promising at his death a further legacy of three thousand ducats. Ho expressed his intention of living in the house with them ; while they on their part promised to care for him as if ho were ono of themselves. All was finally arranged to tho great satisfaction of tho inhabitants, in October, 1742. F. Sportelli was made rector, and tho Fathers Mazzini and Jourdan were appointed to be with him. Every one wished Alphonso would have remained there, but he would not yet leave Ciorani.

Having disembarrassed himself of Naples, he set about giving missions in the destitute parts of tho country. In ono of tho numberless villages where ho gave a mission, ho obtained with great difficulty a lodging in a monastery, where tho Archbishop had ordered him to bo received. The Superior received him with a very bad grace, and took leave of him still more rudely. As soon as tho mission was terminated, ho turned him out of the monastery, notwithstanding his being attacked by fever in consequence of fatigue : ho loft the placo without uttering a word of complaint. By order of tho Archbishop he went to St. Thecla, although ho was scarcely convalescent. Hero also he was rudely received by tho curate, who protended ho could not lodge him, and that he had sent a message to tell him so. He tried in vain to calm the bad humour

of the curate, and at length a notary who was present, indignant at his scandalous behaviour, gave Alphonso and his companions accommodation in his own house. This mission was attended with great results.

Again at Conea he was treated in a similar manner; the curate would not have a mission there, although the Archbishop of Amalfi had commanded it, and on his arrival he was refused admission to the house. Without being disconcerted, he quietly took refuge in a corner of the church. A gentleman who witnessed the proceeding received them into his own house, and this mission also had wonderful success. Peace was restored to families, restitutions were made, and when they departed, the people followed them, weeping and crying, "Alas! why will you leave us so soon?"

While Alphonso, always more and more disgusted with the world, did penance at Ciorani, and laboured for the salvation of men, the world did its best to attract him again. His father, D. Joseph, could not endure the thought that his brilliant talents should be employed in the country among poor peasants and shepherds; and as he had once longed to see him among the first at the Neapolitan bar, he now longed to see him occupy a dignified position in the church. To obtain this he employed every artifice, but Alphonso on his part was invulnerable to all attacks. "Speak no more to me," he wrote to his father, "on the subject of the episcopate; even if you succeed in obtaining a bishopric for me,

I will instantly refuse it. We have a rule in our Congregation to refuse all such dignities.” I). Joseph desired to see his son raised to dignities in this world, while he only wished to see his father obtain great glory in heaven. He wrote to him about this time as follows: “ I beseech you, my dear father, to keep yourself more closely united to God. Confess often, and have your accounts ready, for our Lord will come at an hour when we least expect. Think of your advanced age ; for who knows how soon you may be called from this world ! That day will come, whether we watch or not : I recommend you to hear mass every day, for I fear much for your eternal salvation. I hope the Virgin Mary will assist you, but without your co-operation she will do nothing.”

CHAPTER XVI.

While affairs were prospering at Nocera, Mgr. Dominici obtained the sanction of the government for the establishment of the house, and in July, 1743, he issued the letters of authorization. As there was not yet at Pagani a house and church suitable for the new missionaries, the bishop granted them the church of St. Dominic. Crowds came from the surrounding villages to benefit by their instructions, and they soon became the objects of veneration to the whole neigh-

bourhood. When the first stone of the now establishment was laid, the chapter of the Cathedral and the four Curates of the Dean attended, the Dean himself giving the benediction ; a multitude of people came from all parts, who made the air resound with thanksgivings to God, and to the Dean Cantaldi, for having established this house among them. The construction was hardly commenced when materials flowed in from all quarters as if by miracle. Men and women strove to rival each other in contributing towards its erection ; they laboured with their own hands, ladies of quality, gentlemen, all united to hasten the progress of the work. Married as well as unmarried do-spoiled themselves of their jewels and ornaments to contribute towards the establishment. The seven communes voted one hundred ducats. The bishop confided to the fathers the spiritual direction of his seminary. The brothers of the Confraternity of the Rosary, chiefly composed of gentlemen, would have one of them for their director, and to preach to them every Sunday.

This foundation in the diocese of Nocera was so much applauded that Alphonso had scarcely breathing-time. When they found at Angri the good he was doing everywhere, they insisted on having a mission, the place containing about five thousand souls. He went there the month of November, and was received as an apostle, each striving to procure some object that he had worn or touched. He lodged in the house of Laurence

Rossi, whose daughter obtained from a lay brother a pair of stockings tinged with his blood. She preserved them very devoutly ; but a religious in the neighbourhood happening to hear of it, reproved her for doing so, Alphonso being still alive : she gave them away one day to a poor man whose legs were swollen with dropsy. Some days after he returned to the house entirely cured, and when she expressed her astonishment he replied, “From the time you gave me the stockings the swelling has disappeared.”

Alphonso gathered in this mission the most wonderful fruits. They calculated there were in this place a hundred and twenty-eight women of the town ; but when the mission was finished there was no longer one, all had been reformed. More than three hundred young girls bid adieu to the world, and embraced a religious life. A priest whose life had been scandalous, became a sincere penitent ; and a young gentleman left all to enter the Congregation. He had not yet been in the centre of the town of Nocera, but as soon as they heard the wonders he had accomplished at Angri, he was solicited to preach in the Church of St. Matthew. This was a most fatiguing mission, the parish containing about six thousand souls. Two gentlemen of the place entered the Congregation upon this occasion. To inspire the people with devotion towards the Blessed Virgin, he exhorted the faithful of the parish of St. Matthew to erect a statue to our Lady of Dolours in the church. Immediately the women brought to the church every-

thing they had most precious in gold and silver ; tho offerings were so numerous that a considerable sum remained which was given to the poor. Alphonso was so devoted to Mary, that this most glorious Virgin testified her love for him by operating the most extraordinary conversions at his intercession. The evening he arrived an unfortunate young man arose during the night to engage in a sinful transaction. He had a repugnance, however, to commit a sin with tho scapular about his neck : he took it off to place it in a hole in the wall, but when ho extended his hand, he felt himself drawn back, and fled from tho spot in terror. The following night tho Blessed Virgin, willing to recompense tho slight homage paid to her scapular, appeared to him in a dream : “ Miserable being,” she said, “thou hadst respect for my scapular, and thou hadst no horror for offending my Son ! To-morrow the Father Alphonso will come here to give a mission ; go, confess to him and amend thy life.” Tho young man had never heard of Alphonso, and knew nothing of the mission ; but next morning ho went to find a species of fortune-teller, to have his dream interpreted, but before ho could open his mouth this person addressed him with, “ Do you not know that Father Alphonso has arrived to-day to give a mission ? ” When tho young man heard tho words “ Alphonso,” and “ mission,” ho was thunderstruck ; ho ran in haste to tho dwelling of Alphonso, found him and recounted to him tho whole story. “ So then,” said Alphonso, his eyes

filling with tears, “our good mother has sent you to mo.” Ho reconciled him with God, and his life over after was most edifying.

When Alphonso was in Naples with Father Sarnelli, their zeal led them to attempt a most difficult measure, which to the great joy of tho Cardinal they succeeded in carrying into execution. The great number of bad women scattered over the town was a scandal to all tho good : they managed after much labour and difficulty to banish all such characters to one particular quarter of the town, the suburb of St. Anthony.

CHAPTER XVII.

When they opened the mission at Ciorani, they found the house much too small to receive the numbers of clergy and laity who came to make retreats. These exercises produced immense benefit; throughout the diocese of Salerno, those persons who came to place themselves under the direction of Alphonso, were distinguished by their probity and piety. Several priests, whose lives had been scandalous, wore totally reformed, and became faithful labourers in tho vineyard of the Lord. When the Archbishop came to visit the house, and saw the good that was done, ho entreated Alphonso to extend the buildings. At the instigation of tho Archbishop ho proposed to commence, but Father Rossi, who

-was ruler, differed from him in opinion, because of their want of funds. /Ylphonso spoke to him once and again ; but when ho saw that ho still hesitated, he said with firmness, “ My father, we ought not to build as seculars do, who begin by amassing money, and then set to work; wo ought to follow an opposite rule ; wo ought first to build, and afterwards expect from Providence what is necessary.” Father Rossi obeyed, and animated by the confidence of Alphonso, he began with only one sequin in his pocket.

The expectations of his superior were not ill-founded : Father Rossi never had cause to regret his obedience, for independent of his own liberality, the Archbishop wrote a circular to incite all the diocese to contribute towards tho work. Considerable sums were forwarded to them, and these were not confined to the diocese.

God did not limit the succours of His Providence : one day that Father Rossi found himself dispirited because of the expense, Heaven assisted him in a very singular manner. A young mau presented himself to be received into tho Congregation as a lay-brother ; and Father Rossi admitted him provisionally. In withdrawing to prepare himself for admission, ho put into the hands of tho father somo pieces of money wrapped up in paper, asking him to say mass for him. The paper seemed to contain about ten shillings ; but what was Rossi's surprise on opening it after his departure, *to find* a hundred golden ducats ! Ifo immediately sent after tho young man, but he could not bo heard of,

and never was seen again. He learned by this the excellence of obedience, and the recompense God bestows on those who, despising human wisdom, trust only in Him.

There happened yet another remarkable instance of Providence. Alphonso one day called together the young students, and ordered them to get up a petition to Jesus Christ in the most Holy Sacrament, for the success of the newly-begun building. When the petition was signed, he deposited it in the Holy Tabernacle, adding his own petition to that of the young clerks. But scarcely had he done so, when he was suddenly called to Naples, to vote for several gentlemen who wished to receive the order of Knighthood, at the Seat of the Porta Nuova. He made no inquiries, but instantly set out mounted on a wretched mule, and arrived at Porta Nuova. On attempting to enter, the guard mistook him for some vagabond who would intrude for the purpose of begging, and rudely repulsed him. His clothes were shabby, his beard unshorn, and his hair in disorder; he smiled at the mistake, and waited quietly until the chevalier in waiting perceived him and advanced to meet him, not with the usual forms of salutation, but respectfully kissing his hand. On this occasion he received a present so considerable, that it sufficed to finish the new buildings. He afterwards said laughing, that he would not have refused his vote even to the son of a coal-heaver.

About this time D. Joseph Liguori came to Ciorani to visit his son, probably desiring to see

one who conferred such honour on the family, or perhaps to persuade him if possible to accept some more brilliant position. Be that as it may, he had scarcely entered the mansion, when he was penetrated with a deep feeling of devotion; he admired the edifying life they led, the silence which reigned, and the odour of sanctity which transfused everything. It filled his mind with thoughts of a blessed eternity, and detached his heart from worldly things. He felt a holy envy at the happiness of his son's life, and no longer thought of a bishopric for him. He pressed him to his bosom, kissed him, and blessed the Lord for the benedictions showered upon his house. He prolonged his stay at Ciorani, and every day more taken with the humble and peaceful life of the fathers, the sanctity of his son, the wisdom he exhibited in the direction of his community, the zeal and success of his missions, he took the resolution of forsaking the world, renouncing his rank, and living under the direction of Alphonso, as a humble lay-brother. He was so resolved on making the sacrifice that he besought permission with tears in his eyes. But Alphonso, though inwardly delighted with the humility of his father, in whom he recognized the visible effects of grace, nevertheless dissuaded him from his purpose, assuring him that it was not the will of God he should leave the world, but remain in it to edify by his example. Vanquished by the resistance of his son, he returned to Naples an altered man. What could not the prayers of such a son effect?

Not content with being a pious and exemplary nobleman, he would become a Saint; he lived like a fervent Anchorite, praying in the church, meditating and reading the Lives of the Saints at home, he kept up a regular correspondence with his son, following his counsels in all that concerned his salvation. When he asked him to recommend to him those Saints' Lives from which he would receive most benefit, Alphonso pointed out the Lives of St. Louis Gonzaga, St. Philip Neri, St. Peter of Alcantara, and "Meditations on Eternal Truths" by Rossignoli, and "Eternal Maxims" by Cotaneo.

The sun still shone which had enlightened with its beams the birth of the house of Pagani; but about this time it became obscured by clouds, and serious alarms succeeded to the dawn of its morning hopes. The devil feared the increase of a work so contrary to his designs, and attacked it immediately through the envy that began to fill the hearts of some in the neighbourhood. The esteem of the bishop, the applause of the gentry, the concourse of people who frequented the church, gave umbrage to the curates, and excited their jealousy to such a degree that they repented having given a consent to the establishment of the missionaries among them; to the curates were added other secular priests, and regulars also, who saw themselves deserted by some of their penitents. This jealousy operated to such an extent, that it succeeded in alienating the minds of many, and diminishing the respect in which the public had held the

missionaries, which ended at last in irritation and contempt. Tho religious of other orders, seeing tho favour these missionaries enjoyed with tho people, feared they would in consequence bo deprived of their daily alms. They believed, and they persuaded tho secular priests, that all tho legacies, masses, and donations would soon bo given to them only. They pretended that their very existence was threatened, and it was not to bo wondered at that these outcries gained many of the people themselves, who almost all had near or remote relations among the complainants. First tho missionaries were thought to bo loss useful than had been imagined, and then they were regarded as a burden which weighed too heavily on the people ; there was not the most miserable little shop or house in the place where the subject was not violently discussed. “ What will become of all the poor young men who succeed us,” cried a simple good sort of priest, “ if these missionaries remain at Nocera? they will bo the confessors of tho nuns, the directors of confraternities, and their Congregation will become a gulf which will swallow up every mass and pious legacy.” The war was scarcely declared when the attack commenced. Some priests with tho gentry continued to favour Alphonso, but the fire was too strong to be put down by such feeble means. Twenty-five curates entered into a league with other priests, tho Beligious Mendicants of Nocera and Pagani joined them. They invited the fathers of Mount Olive, the Order of Citeaux, and

those of Montovorgine to join the crusade, but they were horror-struck at the proposition. There remained but two of the curates of Pagani unopposed to the missionaries. When the plot was formed the first move was to endeavour to prejudice the king, but God made known His displeasure in a singular manner. They employed a celebrated advocate to write out a memorial of their grievances; he took up a pen, it would not write; he tried a second and a third all to no purpose; he at length succeeded in writing a page, but when about to turn over the leaf, instead of throwing sand upon it, he lifted the ink by mistake and blotted all he had written. Struck by these mysterious accidents, he exclaimed, "Employ whom you will, but as for me I will have nothing more to do with any business against these missionaries," so saying, he tore the paper in pieces. This fact, which may be compared to what happened to the Emperor Valens, when he wished to oppose St. Basil, made great impression on people of sense, but none on the enemies of the missionaries. They employed another advocate, and God permitted the affair to proceed. In this memorial they assured the king that the town was not, as had been falsely represented, deprived of spiritual succours; that besides the parish church, they had nine other churches served by secular priests and four regular monasteries, that there were a great number of excellent religious, and among the priests many good preachers, doctors, and theologians, who regu-

larly catechised, gave Novenas and Octaves. They affirmed there were few towns in the kingdom that enjoyed so many spiritual advantages as did Noccra.

After this they drew a portrait of the missionaries, in which Alphonso was not spared. They said it was a Congregation not yet approved by the Pope, composed of vagabonds and miserable priests, who not having wherewithal to live in their own country, sought to feed themselves elsewhere, taking the bread from the poor and from the Religious Mendicant Orders ; that the priests in the town who had no prebend, supported themselves by masses of which these men would deprive them ; that to give them the liberty of making acquisitions was to reduce the clergy and the religious to the necessity of quitting the town, or begging at the door of the new comers. They added, that far from being men of talent, all they could do, with the exception of preaching a few popular sermons, was to surround themselves with children and young girls, and teach them to sing sacred songs. Thus Alphonso and his companions, who were honoured at the beginning as so many apostles, found themselves reduced to miserable mendicants and ignorant priests, incapable of fulfilling the duties of their ministry. In order to gain their end with the king, the enemies of Alphonso would fain have persuaded the bishop to concur in their views, but their efforts were vain. Indignant at their wicked designs, he shut his ears to all their representations; and to show

how much he esteemed the missionaries, he in spite of the malcontents chose one of them for his own confessor, and when he visited his diocese, was accompanied by two of the fathers to preach to the people and fill the other offices.

In spite of this check the courage of the curates was not abated: they continued to complain against the missionaries, because of their having the direction of seminaries and different confraternities, and to express their fear that they would soon monopolise the confidence of the faithful, so that the secular clergy would be despoiled of their influence. They had not terms bad enough for those curates who still continued to favour them, blindly asking the assistance of those who would before long supplant them; and at length they ended by demanding of the bishop that on all feast days there should be neither sermons in their church, nor any office whatever. The bishop, despising this ridiculous demand, far from interdicting the exercise of their ministry, recommended to Father Sportelli never to omit any service in the church, and above all, benediction after Vespers on Saturday, and a sermon in honour of the Blessed Virgin; and that on feast days they should endeavour to have some office at the hours the parish churches were closed.

The missionaries now saw themselves engaged in a most serious conflict. The friendship and protection of many excellent priests and wealthy gentlemen of the neighbourhood, did not prevent their enemies giving themselves up to all

sorts of excess against them. If any of the fathers appeared in the town, ho was assailed with taunts and loaded with insults. One day, while preparing to say mass in the parochial church, one of them had the amice pulled out of his hands. The lay-brothers had their share in these outrages whenever any of them appeared in tho street. The brother, Anthony de Lauro, being one day digging in the garden, a man passing on the other side of the hedge began to abuse him grossly ; tho brother continued to dig as if ho heard nothing, and this so irritated the man that ho jumped into tho garden, ran up to him, and gave him a violent blow on the face. Tho holy brother showed no resentment, but knelt down and offered his other cheek ; tho man withdrew covered with confusion. During tho silence of night they would come howling under the windows to break their rest, insulting them by singing indecent songs and using violent language. Alphonso was then at Ciorani, but as soon as ho heard what was doing at Nocera, ho came thither with all speed. But how different was his reception now to what it had formerly been ! Then ho was received with cries of joy; now with expressions of anger and contempt. A. person came to tho house and addressed him as a vagabond, accusing him of coming with his companions to seduce tho inhabitants, to cat the bread of their children, and that being but miserable wretches banished from their own country, they had thrown themselves on this country to devour it. At these

odious words Alphonso humbled himself, and his humility redoubled the audacity of his adversary, who continued abusing him a long time.

The petition addressed to the king had no success ; he knew too well the merit of Alphonso and his disciples, to allow himself to be deceived. But at this epoch tho kingdom being threatened by Austria, his majesty had gone to the Abruzzi, and the enemies of tho Congregation took advantage of tho circumstance : they thought it would bo easy to deceive tho viceroy, Michael Regio. They addressed then a new petition to tho viceroy, taking the opportunity of revenging themselves on the bishop, by accusing him of having passed the limits of his authority when ho authorized tho missionaries to establish themselves in his diocese, affirming that though he could give leave to found a single house, ho could not permit them to have a perpetual foundation, with authority to open a public church. They said the Congregation at Pagani, whoso rules he had approved, was not legitimately established, their rules never having been submitted to the Grand Almoner, and that tho approbation of the Bishop had not received the ratification of the Royal Chamber. Besides, that the foundation could only become valid by a brief from tho Sovereign Pontiff. In spite of all this, they were repulsed by the viceroy, whoso ministers knew tho probity of the missionaries and tho favourable dispositions of the king.

Defeated once more, but not cast down, they began to seek help in Noccra itself. They went

to Cantaldi, ho on whom Alphonso leant, and who had aided him in tho establishment at Paganì. Vico assumed the appearance of virtue so successfully, that he allowed himself to be gained, and began to repent of what he had done for Alphonso. Looking on his Congregation as an assemblage of men who under the mask of piety hid a sordid avarice capable of gratifying itself by means the most base, Cantaldi, now disgusted with them, ceased to furnish tho necessary supplies ho had assigned to them, and though living under tho same roof with the fathers, ho never addressed to them a single word ; thus showing them his desire that they should withdraw from his premises. Alphonso knowing from what had happened at the Villa, that they were threatened with a similar misfortune, inquired diligently to know tho will of God ; he went to Naples to consult with those enlightened and pious friends by whoso advice ho was guided in his difficulties. He went also to Castellamare to consult Mgr. Falcoja, and while they were talking, tho bishop suddenly casting his eyes on a small statue of St. Michael, exclaimed, “ It is the devil, it is the devil ; hold firm and continue to fight ; God and St. Michael will protect you ! ” He then advised him to dedicate the house and the church to the Archangel Michael.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The tempest, far from abating, continued to rage with redoubled violence at Pagani. In the midst of his great embarrassments Alphonso availed himself of the hand of man to defend the work of God, while he placed his chief confidence on the Rock of Ages. He prayed and mortified himself; he embraced the cross, he besought the prayers of many holy souls, particularly of religious houses, and he ceased not to go on with the missions wherever he was asked. His enemies continued their hostilities, and not content with attempting to ruin the house at Pagani, they desired to blot out the Congregation from the face of the earth. Their continual intrigues, their daily cavilings levelled against him and his companions, at length aroused the zeal of several gentlemen of Pagani, Nocera, and other places in the neighbourhood, who boldly declared themselves in their favour; in short, there was hardly one respectable family who did not take their part. The district of Nocera is divided into seven municipal communities, who besides the Syndic belonging to each, elect yearly three general Syndics. They were ordered to convoke an assembly of the inhabitants of the district, to consider some affairs that would be proposed for their deliber-

ation. The great affair of the moment being stated at a meeting of five or six hundred persons, all the communities decided in favour of the missionaries, with the exception of those of Pagani, who were divided in opinion ; not one of the malcontents had the courage to declare against the resolution there decided, that the missionaries should be defended and upheld, with the exception of one man, who was immediately attacked by Don Gaétan Francisco, a zealous adherent of theirs, and was glad to escape by leaping a wall. They all engaged to unite in defending Alphonso, and took upon them-

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the affair. When this manifestation of good feeling was reported to him, he burst into tears, at finding the good he had done among them appreciated by the most important class. But his enemies became more and more embittered when they saw themselves opposed by the most respectable part of the inhabitants. In the beginning of June, 1744, they attacked him both at Naples and at Rome. Although the foundation rested on the authority of the sovereign, they pretended that the existence of the house was contrary to law, and besides that they were but a reunion of vagabonds, useless to the state and hurtful to religion. At Rome they described them as men of wicked lives, founded without the consent of the Holy See, contrary to canonical laws, and the decrees of Sovereign Pontiffs. When Alphonso saw that with the branches they would destroy the root, he recalled the ancient

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spirit which had animated him at the bar, and with the civil laws in his hand he collected the means of defence, established the reasons which proved the rights of their cause, and showed in what circumstances a convent could be called lawful or illegal. At Rome he knew equally well how to reduce his enemies to silence ; he confounded them by bulls of Sovereign Pontiffs, and by the authority of canon law. He showed how no institution had been definitively approved until after a period of probation, and having been during its infancy sustained by the protection of bishops. As to the calumnies against the lives of the members of his Congregation, he would not notice them ; for they were sufficiently contradicted by public notoriety. The memorials he produced pleased the sovereign at Naples, and obtained favour with the Pope and the Cardinals.

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After having been defeated in this attempt, which they had considered infallible, the malcontents had recourse to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. They alleged that the house of Pagani was prejudicial to the welfare of the church in general, as well as to particular churches ; and entered into the same details as formerly regarding the religious advantages of the place. They did not forget to renew their slanders against the character of the missionaries ; adding that they carried on a shameful traffic in crucifixes, chaplets, &c. buying them cheap to sell them again at an enormous price, besides imposing on the people to carry stones

and other materials for the now building. The regular priests who opposed them complained of their having been admitted into the town without their consent, conformable to canon law, &c. and that having no regular revenue, they were forced to beg, to the prejudice of the religious established before them. The seculars united with them in beseeching the Sacred Congregation to order the bishop to suspend the building of the house and church, and to forbid the missionaries to beg. They also requested that the missionaries might be cited to appear before his Holiness as having incurred the censures brought against them by the canon law and the bulls of Popes.

The gentlemen of Pagani, Nocera, Corbora, and St. Egidio, no sooner learnt this new attack, than they armed themselves to defend Alphonso. Thirty-six of them undertook, the 16th of July, 1744, to charge themselves with the conduct of this affair at Rome, and to procure an advocate and procurator. At the same time several curates, the chapter of the cathedral, the clergy of Nocera, and twenty-three clerks of Pagani, declared themselves to the Pope in favour of Alphonso. They explained to his Holiness the good the missionaries had done in the diocese of Salerno and elsewhere; the numerous conversions of priests as well as laymen daily operated by the retreats given at Ciorani; the services rendered to curates; adding, that not content with the numberless exercises of devotion given in their church, they assisted the dying and instructed the young. They made

an eulogium on the exemplary life of Alphonso, his disinterestedness and zeal for the glory of God, beseeching the Pope to protect a work so useful for the Church.

The ways of Providence are admirable : the authors of this attack now saw themselves the victims of their own malice. Such bitter complaints, apparently leaning on such positive facts, contrasted with the eulogiums bestowed on Alphonso, and the number and quality of his defenders, placed the court of Rome under the necessity of instituting an inquest to find out the truth, in order to do justice. Benedict XIV. then occupied the Holy See, and hearing of an institution lately established in the Church, he wished to inquire into the merits of its founder. He accordingly instructed Cardinal Spinola to obtain exact information from the Bishop of Nocera. In consequence of this demand, Mgr. Dominici replied the 3rd of August, giving a statement of the number of curates, secular and regular priests, and of the exercises of devotion practised in the diocese of Nocera. He affirmed that all the churches were sufficiently provided with revenues, each having enough for its wants. Then to give the lie to the complaints made by the malcontents, he declared that the churches and chapels of Pagani possessed in all about eighteen hundred masses founded in perpetuity, and that the priests, secular as well as regular, were not sufficient for all these masses, and had to distribute them every year to strangers, priests, and religious. He did not

forgot to mention the acclamation with which the missionaries had been at first received, and the joy the curates themselves had manifested at laying the foundation-stone of the buildings ; he told also of the zeal with which the Syndics and gentlemen had obtained the king's approbation for the establishment. He combated the calumnies regarding the sale of crucifixes and chaplets, the carrying of stones for the buildings, &c. He then proceeded to the most important point, that is to say, the end for which Alphonso proposed to found the Congregation, the providing missions for destitute and abandoned country villages and hamlets, and to labour in reforming young clerks by giving them retreats, and gentlemen also, by these and other pious practices. He added, that before giving his consent to the foundation, he had demanded a mission that he might see with his own eyes its effects, and from that moment he was so convinced of the wonderful good resulting, that he desired nothing so much as to see the now institute established in his diocese. He finished by an eulogium on the sanctity of Alphonso, and the high estimation in which he was held by the Cardinal Archbishop himself and many other bishops.

At the same time Mgr. Vigilanti, Bishop of Cajazzo, took his cause in hand by writing to his friend the Cardinal Firrau at Rome, who was Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops. He justified the conduct of Alphonso, and explained to the Cardinal the injustice of the

accusations laid to his charge. “His cause is that of God,” he said, “and therefore it excites the hatred of the wicked, a hatred all the more violent that the work is great. My diocese has experienced for three years the happy fruits of the labour of these worthy and saintly servants of Jesus Christ, who have sanctified every village where they have been.”

The bad success of this last attempt was not sufficient to make the malcontents renounce their enterprise. Not having been able to obtain the suppression of the house, they sought to interrupt the erection of the church. They got possession of the royal decree, and by bribing the underlings of office, they altered the words from “the king permits the erection of a house with a church,” to “the king permits the erection of a house without a church ;” and with this in their hands they hastened to the Marquis Fraggianni, commissary of the king, who was persuaded that Alphonso in building a church had gone beyond his limits.

On the 19th of July the commissary despatched an order to Nocera, to discontinue the building at Pagani. This time the wicked triumphed, and Alphonso was in great embarrassment, not knowing how to proceed. He sent F. Francis St. Severino to Naples, to the minister of state, the Marquis Brancone, to inform him of the obstacle, and request his assistance to remove it. The marquis was astonished when he heard of this, for he remembered that the king had expressly given leave to build a church ; he wrote

a note immediately to one of the clerks of the bureau, and gave it to F. St. Severino to carry, commanding him to show the register. This fellow had been corrupted, and angry at the suspicion that was awakened, he boldly opened the register, saying to the father, “You are losing your time here ; his majesty has given no authority to a Congregation such as yours to have a church like the Regulars.” The father returned to the Marquis, who sent for this clerk and ordered him to produce the register. He brought it, protesting with great boldness that it was quite correct. The marquis divining the fraud that had been committed, said with a tone of severity, “I know the intention of the king ; ” and then with his own hand he wrote in the register, “a house with a church ; ” and not content with this, he ordered the fellow to go instantly to the Marquis Fraggianni, and tell him the true state of the case. It was necessary to submit, and on the 21st of July an order was transmitted to the Syndic of Pagani, to permit the progress of the building.

While God arranged the happy issue of this affair, He sent a severe affliction to Alphonso, in the loss of the excellent Father Janvier Mario Sarnelli. After succeeding to his wish in the reforms he had projected at Naples, he died on the 30th of June, 1744, regretted by all, although the Congregation were consoled by having such a powerful protector in heaven at a moment when they were suffering such persecution on earth.

CHAPTER XIX.

In spite of all their successive defeats, the malcontents were not proof against a now temptation, which like their former fraud turned to their own confusion. Beaten at Naples, repulsed at Rome, they appealed to the tribunals without success. Cantaldi would not openly appear against them; but a process was commenced in the name of his sister, to force the missionaries to abandon the house. In consequence they were summoned to produce their means of defence. The sister of Cantaldi forced herself unexpectedly into the house accompanied by twenty other persons and two notaries, before whom she declared that the house was her property. When Alphonso heard of this he was extremely annoyed; he came immediately to Nocera to consult on what was to be done, when the bishop and other friends advised him not to yield. A celebrated advocate undertook the cause, and the pretended proprietorship of the sister was soon exposed to the confusion of those who had attempted to play off such a trick. Their resentment, far from being checked, exhibited itself in everything that could cause annoyance to the fathers. One day Alphonso complained in the mildest terms of the wrong done him in attempting to turn him out of the

house, when a person of rank, and belonging to the clergy, was insolent enough to say, "If you will act tho thieves and rob people by force, why do you not go to the highway?" "Blessed be God," replied Alphonso, "I have left my home to be treated as a robber at Nocera !" A priest of the noble house of Olevano, who was present at this deplorable scene, lost all patience to see such a man treated with insult, and was with difficulty restrained from throwing the aggressor out of the window ; he was only prevented by Alphonso, who was horror-struck at seeing two priests proceeding to such extremities. Certainly tho malcontents were instigated by tho devil, otherwise they must have been arrested by so many defeats. In tho month of August they made another attempt at Romo, but warned by experience they no longer attacked Alphonso, but confined themselves to defaming his companions. This attack roused all tho most respectable inhabitants of Nocera and Pagani in their favour. The three general Syndics took upon themselves the expenso of defending the Congregation at Rome. On tho other hand Benedict XIV. wishing to sift the matter to tho bottom, again charged Cardinal Spinola to make new inquiries of Cardinal Spinelli at Naples, and also of tho Archbishop of Salerno, *Mgr. Rossi*. All this was tho work of Providence, in order that the Congregation might be known to tho Sovereign Pontiff and the world at large ; and in reality tho brilliant testimony rendered by these two dignitaries of tho church, hastened the ap-

probation given by the court of Rome in favour of the new Institute.

This determination to investigate the matter, taken by the Holy Sec, was far from agreeable to the malcontents, who knew too well the sanctity of life exhibited by those who lived under the direction of Alphonso. Almost despairing of success they as a last resource attempted to prejudice Cardinal Spinola. He was then at Torre del Greco ; they therefore sent deputies accompanied by an advocate, who painted Alphonso and his companions in the blackest colours. The Cardinal was moved, the calumnies entered into his soul. The name, Congregation, which irritated the curates, gave him occasion to say, that he wished this institute were not a society depending on one head like the Congregation of St. Vincent of Paul, but rather an institute, of which each Congregation would be immediately under the bishop of the diocese in which they happened to be situated. These words, which dropped from the Cardinal without his attaching much importance to them, were a cause of triumph to the faction, who believed themselves now certain of victory. They returned to Pagani proclaiming everywhere that the Cardinal would not approve of their rule, and rejoicing in the hope of their being suppressed immediately. At the news of this supposed victory, the three Syndics went accompanied by many other gentlemen to wait upon his Eminence. He supposed they came on the same errand as the others, and received them

very coldly ; but no sooner did he learn how very different was their intention, than, filled with consolation, he exclaimed, “ Gentlemen, I am as much edified by what you tell me to-day, as I was scandalised yesterday by the language of the curates.” He promised to interest himself as much as possible in favour of the Congregation.

In the meantime Mgr. Dominici attempted to arrange the affair by arbitration ; the proposal was agreed to by both parties ; but when Cantaldi stated that he would take upon himself the debts contracted, provided the missionaries evacuated the premises and quitted Pagani, and if they would not, he would shut up the church of St. Dominic, and force them to live as simple individuals, the bishop in the greatest indignation broke up the meeting, and turning to the fathers said, “ Prosecute your cause at Rome and at Naples, trust in Cardinal Spinelli. God will protect you.”

Mgr. Dominici had taken the greatest interest in the Congregation, and done all in his power to establish them, when he was removed by death on the 22nd of August of this year. This misfortune gave great hope to the disaffected ; they believed the missionaries would no longer have any support in the diocese, but they were mistaken. Mgr. Volpi, who succeeded to the bishopric, was equally well disposed towards them as his predecessor had been.

The reports transmitted to Rome by Cardinal Spinelli and Mgr. Rossi, harmonised in every

particular, by which they vouched for the sanctity of the missionaries and the wonders operated by their means. It was thus that Providence arranged all things to work together for their good ; for after four successive appeals, after eight months' intriguing at Rome, where neither money, chicanery, nor falsehood were spared, the only result was making known to the Pope the excellence of the Congregation they tried to calumniate, thus verifying the prophecy of Zacharias, "Thy salvation will come from thy enemies." But in the intermediate time Alphonso and his companions drank the bitter chalice of tribulation.

CHAPTER XX.

While the house of Pagani was agitated by the tempest, God opened a new field to Alphonso, destined to receive seed not less productive than that which had hitherto been sown. Don Dominic Fiori, professor of music in the cathedral of Naples, having no heir, determined to found a house in his native place, Madugno. The project pleased the Archbishop of Bari, Mgr. Gaota, who knowing Alphonso anticipated the greatest benefits for his diocese. He united with Fiori in inviting him to give a mission at Madugno, in order to excite the inhabitants to wish for their establishment. Alphonso accepted the invitation, and it was decided that he should

go there in the month of November. When the prince of Castellanca, Don Mathias Miroballo of Aragon, heard of this journey, he besought Alphonso to visit on his way his fief of Iliceto, to give the inhabitants the instruction and consolation of which they were so much in want.

This was no sooner known to Mgr. Lucci, Bishop of Bovino, than he dispatched a Canon of his cathedral, James Casati, to join in the invitation, which Alphonso accepting, he arrived there with his companions on the 12th of the month. This mission had the usual success. The Canon had a further object in inviting him. At the corner of a wood called Vallin-Vincoli, on a small elevation, stood an ancient church dedicated to the Virgin, under the title of Mary of Consolation. It had once belonged to the Augustinians, and in this church was a large painting of the Virgin Mary, for which the faithful of Iliceto and the neighbourhood had a great veneration. Canon Casati, who had a great devotion to the place, and above all to this picture, had resolved on establishing a community. The prince of Castellanca having spoken much to him of Alphonso, he desired if possible to have him there, that the devotion to our Lady might be revived. Mgr. Lucci eagerly joined in this scheme, anticipating the fruits which his diocese would derive from it. Alphonso however hesitated to accept the proposal, because the distance between the church and any inhabited place was very considerable; but when, yielding to the entreaties of the Canon and the Chapter,

ho visited the picture, lie was so captivated that tho Fathers Cafaro and St. Severino easily persuaded him to accept the offer, to tho great joy of tho people.

Onco settled at Iliceto, ho saw in tho Pouillo the vast domains of tho crown, where thousands of men were employed in keeping flocks and herds, and cultivating the ground to produce food for them. Ho sighed at tho sight : in these territories were several hundred persons, who rarely received any spiritual assistance, and even on feast days had seldom an opportunity of hearing mass. Touched by their destitution ho sent his companions out in different directions to distribute to these poor people the bread of life ; and he looked forward to the house of Iliceto becoming tho place from whence these abandoned people would derive spiritual succour in time to come.

Animated with a zeal always active, he exposed to the king of Naples the deplorable state of this population ; and the necessity of assisting them. The king replied through tho Marquis Branconi, that he had learned with great satisfaction tho benefit the people had already drawn from these missions, and that he hoped to see them continue their labours with increasing zeal. His Majesty gave his approbation for the new house at Iliceto on tho 9th of January, 1745.

After having arranged tho affairs of this house, he assembled his companions and departed for Madugno towards the end of the same month.

The mission was a difficult one, and cost much labour and fatigue. For many years no missionary had visited the place ; piety was almost extinct, and sin dominated. But God blessed their labours ; the whole town were touched by grace, and the most obstinate sinners came full of compunction to cast themselves at the feet of the missionaries and renounce their evil deeds. Good succeeded to evil, ancient confraternities were re-established, convents reformed, and many priests whose conduct had only been coldly regular, roused from their inaction by Alphonso, became ever after zealous and devoted to apostolic labours. As usual he succeeded in inspiring a great devotion towards the Blessed Virgin and the most Holy Sacrament.

This mission lasted forty days, so great were the wants of the inhabitants ; all admired the zeal of the missionaries, and wished them to settle among them. In short the foundation was almost concluded, when Alphonso heard that the king of Naples had granted an establishment to the Fathers of St. Vincent of Paul in the town of Bari ; and in order not to interfere with this mission he advised Fiori to make arrangements with these Fathers for Madugno. The religious of a monastery in this town attest that one morning while Alphonso celebrated mass in their church, he was raised several feet from the ground.

After their return from Madugno, Alphonso and his companions suffered much in their new establishment at Illiceto. Besides their voluntary

penances, they experienced on all sides suffering and affliction. The person who gave the house, reserved the revenues for himself during his life, and there remained nothing for the fathers. A priest who was there during that winter describes in a letter the state to which they were reduced. The bread, he says, was of rye, mixed with bran, black as a coal, and ill baked, and sometimes they had none at all, and were obliged to accept the charity of an old man who lived on the produce of his goats and the culture of a small field near his cottage. For pottage they had a species of broth or panada, or bruised beans, so old that they had the colour of bread. They never tasted meat, except when some sheep or cow died of exhaustion. They had no fruit but wild chestnuts or crab-apples. They rarely had wine, and then but in small quantity, and very bad. On feast days they had a large cake made of the same flour as the bread, but seasoned with a little cheese and salt, for sugar or pepper were luxuries they could not afford. They had no linen, and no money to buy it. They were almost shirtless, and could only change once in two or three weeks. There never was a religious house where greater poverty reigned: their clothes were ragged and patched, their pocket handkerchiefs a wisp of straw or rags. The house was an old convent, suppressed during the pontificate of Innocent XI., and was but a mass of ruins and filth. The wind blew more keenly within than without, the walls were full of cracks, the partitions brick without mortar.

The windows were of oiled paper instead of glass. The roof was bad, the cells were without ceiling, so that the snow covered the beds during winter : in short, the misery was so great, that one of the fathers lost courage, and returned to the world.

Alphonso himself wrote at this time to a friend, "If God does not help us speedily I shall be obliged to send away my companions, for we have nothing on which to live. Though we eat only beans and drink dirty water, yet we have nearly six hundred ducats of debt."

Among all those miseries, or rather in consequence of these miseries, Alphonso had the misfortune to lose his dear Vitus Curzius. During the month of July, being without food in the house, he was sent to beg a little corn. Although the good brother was unaccustomed to traverse the country during the burning heats, he nevertheless obeyed ; but one evening being refused a lodging at a convent of nuns, he slept in the field, and during the night was seized with violent fever, and not being able to drag himself to his own convent, was taken into the house of a charitable priest. After forty-nine days' intense suffering, he went to receive the reward of his labours in the mansions of the blessed. His death occurred on Saturday, the 18th of September, 1745.

This death afflicted Alphonso deeply, though consoled by the reflection that he had died rich in merits and virtues. The chapter of the Cathedral and many priests joined the missionaries

in paying him the last honours. All the confraternities with numbers of the faithful also assisted, imploring his protection and invoking him as a Saint. Alphonso sung the mass amidst torrents of tears, which frequently interrupted him. Mgr. Amato, Bishop of Lacedogna, had a great devotion towards this holy brother, and would have his skull for a relic, preserving it during twenty years on his prie-dieu. After the death of this prelate it was brought back to the house of Iliceto, where it still remains. An abridgement of his Life has been written by Alphonso.

CHAPTER XXI.

The fury of the inhabitants of Pagani was not abated, and new plots were invented to ruin the missionaries. It is thus that God permits His elect to be tried by heavy afflictions, in order to exalt them the more at last, allowing those enterprises which tend most to promote His glory to be crossed and combated, that afterwards the strength of His powerful arm may be more clearly displayed.

After their successes at Naples and Rome, every one thought their troubles were over, but they were deceived. Cantaldi continued to look coldly on them, and did not disguise his animosity, hoping to attain his object through the instrumentality of others, until finding himself disappointed in this, he threw off the mask

and openly attacked them. Scarcely had Alphonso returned from the Pouillo, when he openly revoked the donation he had made in their favour, and in concert with his sister cited them to appear before the council of the king. Not knowing how to justify this step, he pretended that the missionaries had deceived him in usurping the title of Congregation, when they had neither been recognised by the king nor the Popo ; he demanded in consequence that they should be forbidden to build, protesting he had made the donation not for a Religious Community, but for a College of Priests.

The affair seemed of such importance, that the council sent a royal auditor to verify the facts on the spot. The claims of Cantaldi were found insufficient, and on the 11th of January, 1745, the auditor, in the name of the council, confirmed the missionaries in possession of the property, the donation being found valid and irrevocable.

This disappointment did not abate the animosity of Cantaldi ; at the instigation of his partisans he presented a claim to the king filled with malignity rather than reason, to which thirty priests put their signature. In this instance they refrained from attacking Alphonso, but levelled their batteries against his companions. The Syndic of Pagani and three other Syndics undertook their defence, and the indubitable integrity of Alphonso and his companions made his majesty withstand all the numerous attempts against them. The Marquis Branconi bid them

be of good courage and fear nothing, for the king was too much scandalised by the conduct of priests, who, established to be the mediators between God and the people, ought to have been most zealous in promoting such a work, rather than undermining it. When an army besieges a town, they first attack it boldly, in the hope of intimidating the inhabitants ; but if these defend themselves with courage and boldness, they next proceed to undermine the Avails. It was plain, however, that those men acted entirely at the instigation of the devil. They introduced two barrels of gunpowder under the foundation of the house, and had not one of their accomplices, stung by remorse of conscience, revealed the plot, the whole would have been destroyed. Father Mazzini from that moment was obliged to keep a strict watch nightly.

Alphonso was then at Iliceto, and far from being discouraged by this barbarous attempt, his confidence became greater from having escaped so many imminent dangers. Meantime the fathers at Pagani remained, as it were, shut up in prison in the house of Cantaldi. Living under the same roof with him they necessarily often met, but their salutations were almost never returned. Placed under a continual restraint they sighed for the moment of their deliverance ; every minute seemed a year until the buildings were finished. F. Mazzini in writing to Alphonso, expressed himself thus : “ I am dying with desire to quit the house of Cantaldi, where we are an object of contempt to all the secular priests. I

would be contented, my father, to live on the grass of the field, in order to save something to forward the buildings ; but this is morally impossible, for we have no other revenue than what is derived from three masses, and the provision of grain is small indeed."

The new Bishop, Mgr. Volpi, was not less favourably disposed towards them than his predecessor, Mgr. Dominici, had been ; far from taking part in the animosity of their enemies, he protected them on every occasion. It was determined that they should assist at processions, and like other priests obey the chapter of the cathedral, but the Bishop freed them from these obligations, and also that of assisting at conferences on moral cases. He liked to see them directing the confraternities of gentlemen and tradespeople. He used to attend the sermons delivered to the former, and often called upon the fathers to fill different offices in his diocese.

Enjoying the protection of the Bishop and also of the king, Alphonso nevertheless would have yielded so far to obtain if possible a truce with his enemies ; but the prelate with the elite of the inhabitants of Nocera would have him remain firm, as all were convinced that on the establishment of the Congregation at Pagani depended the education of the young, the instruction of the clergy, and the general reformation of the people. They protested their determination to defend his cause to the last, until justice should be triumphant, and although their

firmness rejoiced him, he yet regretted tho continued disputes, which became more bitter than ever.

CHAPTER XXII.

The daily vexations at Pagani took away all courage to remain longer than was absolutely necessary in tho house of Cantaldi, where they were even threatened with death ; accordingly tho walls of the new building were hardly finished when they resolved to remove thither without heeding the risk they ran from damp and other inconveniences. On the 24th of September, 1745, they entered tho new premises during the Octavo of tho Archangel Michael, protector of the Congregation.

When Alphonso at Iliceto hoard of their installation, ho rejoiced exceedingly, and wrote to urge them to a still stricter observance of the rule, which had been somewhat interrupted by all tho previous proceedings. Ho assured them that God would bless them and make them become Saints, only inasmuch as they observed tho rule in all its strictness.

Tho malcontents, provoked to see them established in their new house, again conspired against them, and obtained an order from tho council forbidding them to proceed to do any thing new. Their intention was to interdict their entrance into tho Church of St. Dominic,

where they exercised, their ministry, and to prevent the completion of the little church in process of building. By this they would have obtained all they desired ; for finding themselves hindered from performing the functions of their ministry, they would, have lost hope and definitively abandoned the foundation. Very little was wanting to the success of this last plot ; nothing being finished in the new church, the scaffolding even being still about the arches of the roof. The day came on which an answer to their request was expected, when they would immediately signify to the Fathers that they had gained their cause. Preparatory to this, they had seized the keys of the Church of St. Dominic. Informed of all this by the gentlemen of Nocera, Father Sportelli besought them to seize the king's officer and detain him for one night only. All was done as he had desired. During the night he sent for the workmen, and in spite of the protestations of the architect, he boldly took away the props, smoothed the earth, erected a portable altar, and arranged as well as he could a sort of confessional. They ornamented the altar and the walls with hangings and tapestry, placed garlands and artificial flowers about it ; and the previous evening having obtained permission to bless the Church, at day break he celebrated mass, preached, confessed, and gave communion to the people. During these proceedings the officer arrived with the despatch, and followed by a crowd, with an air of triumph he called for Father Sportelli and those of the

household, declaring to them by order of the king, that no one must have the temerity to attempt any thing new, at the risk of incurring the penalties mentioned in the decree. “We will do nothing now,” replied Father Sportelli, “and we will conform to the order you bring; but I protest that this edifice is a church; the Holy Sacrifice has been celebrated there, we have preached there, and the Holy Sacraments have been administered to the people.”

The reader may imagine the fury these words produced. The populace, outwitted in their attempt, cried out that the chapel was a stable and not a church; and while some pulled down the hangings and exposed the naked bricks, others threw up the earth to show it was not paved, casting it about and throwing the matting right and left. The air resounded with their cries and their abuse. It was a tumultuous day, but in the end hell had to yield the victory.

CHAPTER XXIII.

While Alphonso was at Illiceto, another circumstance occurred to second his zeal for the salvation of the people. Benedict XIV., convinced of the great good produced by missions, conceived the project of reforming by means of them the whole kingdom of Naples. By a brief dated 8th of September, 1745, he delegated Car-

dînai Spinelli, Archbishop of Naples, to superintend this work, with full powers to send whom he would. Many bishops upon this solicited him to send into their dioceses Alphonso and his missionaries, to which tho Cardinal agreed, well knowing the good they did.

When tho time of the vintage was over, Alphonso, having received the necessary commissions from tho Cardinal, and provided with other particular graces from tho holy Father, began his missions in the dioceso of Bovino: tho fruits were abundant both among the clergy and the people.

Ho arrived at Foggia with a number of his missionaries on tho 12th of December. This mercantile town, the capital of the Fouille and situated in its centre, contained above thirty thousand inhabitants, among whom were more strangers than citizens. Ho might be said to have taken it by assault, such were the rapid effects produced. To satisfy the whole population at onco, he opened four different missions in tho four principal churches. He preached to persons of all conditions; he gave retreats to secular and regular clerks, to functionaries, lawyers, and gentlemen. He preached to five convents, he visited the prisons, and left no quarter where liis voice was not heard. Such was the moral influence ho exerted, that no symptom of vico was to be found in the streets.

A terrible example of divine justice occurred at this time, and served as a powerful warning to sinners. One of the fathers went through

tho public places to call tho people to the church. Happening to pass before a tavern, he invited the drinkers to take part in the mission. A tipsy fellow holding up his glass called out, “My Father, would you like to see what is my mission?” and putting it to his lips, ho instantly dropped down dead! This terrible death was the most eloquent and efficacious sermon the people of Foggia heard.

Another circumstance which happened gave them a high idea of tho sanctity of Alphonso. One evening he was preaching before the imago of tho Blessed Virgin of tho Seven Veils, which they had exposed on tho altar. When he spoke of tho glory of tho Mother of God, the people believed they saw an angel rather than a man. A bright ray of light darted from the image across tho church, and rested on tho countenance of Alphonso, and at tho same moment he fell into an ecstasy, and was elevated several feet into tho air. At this spectacle the people uttered such loud cries of joy that they were heard at a great distance, and crowds ran tumultuously towards the church. More than four thousand persons witnessed this miracle.

This mission lasted forty days, producing most miraculous effects on all classes of society : where vice had reigned triumphant, virtue and piety succeeded, and even the cloisters felt the effects, by being instigated to a more punctual and strict observance of their rule. Priests who had led indifferent lives, became men of prayer ;

scandals ceased everywhere, and two clergymen of the place were so touched by grace that they forsook everything and entered the Congregation.

In a rich and commercial town great numbers of charitable persons are to be found. Many purses were opened to Alphonso, who earnestly sought out the most necessitous. Young girls were succoured whose poverty placed them in danger; others were placed in orphan houses, Asylums were procured for repentant sinners, and the aged were assisted in their necessities. Christian charity reigned in all hearts, and the town was delivered from many sources of sin.

The 8th of January, 1746, he terminated the mission at Foggia and went to Troy. One day when on the point of mounting the pulpit, he was told of his father's death, he remained some time in prayer, and then recommended him to the prayers of the people. He had heard of the illness of his father, but was so much occupied in his apostolic labours that he sacrificed the feelings of nature to his God, and continued the missions. Don Joseph Liguori died in sanctity at an advanced age; his virtues were long held in remembrance. After leaving Troy he continued his missions. When at St. Agatha he was seized with fever; this did not prevent his preaching, and when he appeared in the pulpit, the sight of him alone produced compunction in the hearts of the people.

The mission of St. Agatha being ended, he was called to Illiceto; the Canon Casati being

dangerously ill. Unable to ride because of his fever, he took a carriage, and arrived there the evening before the Canon expired. He left all he possessed to the Most Holy Virgin Mary of Consolation, and at his request was buried in the church at the feet of the Virgin. Alphonso, full of gratitude for this donation, celebrated his funeral with the utmost magnificence, all the clergy and the religious, with the different confraternities, assisting at the procession. One hundred ducats were distributed among the poor.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The town of Foggia had conceived the greatest veneration for Alphonso, and knowing his merits, ceased not to apply to him in every emergency. From the month of March, 1746, a great drought had desolated the Foulle, and the seeds sown were almost destroyed. The inhabitants besought him to come to give a Novena in honour of the Blessed Virgin, knowing how much he was beloved by her. Alphonso was still at Illiceto, ill of a fever, but when he heard how afflicted they were at Foggia, he immediately set out, and arrived at the house of Don Ricciardi, an advocate, who had first proposed his being sent for: he was received as an angel from heaven. The Novena had scarcely commenced when his fever suddenly left him; the

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rain fell in abundance, the seed was saved and produced a rich harvest.

During his sojourn in this town, God prepared the foundation of another mission in the diocese of Conza. Mgr. Nicolai regretted to see himself at the head of a vast province in the greatest want of spiritual assistance. One day he was lamenting his position in presence of two pious priests, who suggested to him as the only remedy, to establish in his diocese a house of the missionaries of Father Liguori.

When the Archbishop understood the services the Congregation had rendered to so many dioceses, he eagerly embraced the proposal. After many deliberations it was resolved to establish the missionaries near the territory of Caposeli, in a church endowed and dedicated to the holy Virgin Mary. The Archbishop sent immediately the Archpriest Rossi to meet Alphonso at Foggia. He was by no means anxious to embrace the proposal, circumstances not seeming favourable, but at the request of F. Villani he consented to give a mission there, in order to see more clearly the

On the 22nd of May he went on this new mission, and the consolation his presence brought to the inhabitants could hardly be believed. As he opened the mission they regarded him as another St. Paul, and his fame spread everywhere. What he said seemed not words but arrows which pierced all hearts. On the 3rd of June he went with several gentlemen to visit the church which was offered him, and which bore the name of

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Mater Domini. He was pleased with the situation, being in the midst of an archdiocese, surrounded by many other dioceses in great want of spiritual aid.

The Archbishop was then visiting the territory of Calabritto, a few miles off, and Alphonso thought he ought to visit him, and make his acquaintance. Accordingly he set off, mounted on a mule, and arrived at the house of the family del Plato, where he was staying. Hearing the Archbishop was at dinner he would not disturb him, but went into a small chapel in a wing of the palace to say his office. While there, the oldest son, Don Xavier, came to shut the door, and seeing a man covered with rags and an unshorn head, he took him for a vagabond who was waiting to beg from the Archbishop, and fearing he would steal something told him to go out as he was about to shut the door. "Would you have the goodness to wait until I finish vespers," said Alphonso. "Go out instantly," said the young man; "it is only yesterday we had a napkin stolen, it would be too much to have another to-day." Alphonso was forced to go out, and finished his vespers in the street. After some time he presented himself at the palace, and the Archbishop hearing of his arrival came out and received him with every mark of esteem. The young del Plato looked confounded, and his confusion redoubled when he found Alphonso was a noble Neapolitan gentleman and Superior of a mission. He appeared not to notice the young man's confusion, but continued the conversation, and after

having arranged a meeting at Caposeli, returned in time for the evening sermon. The Archbishop was not a little annoyed when he heard what had happened.

God showered down many benedictions on this mission, the first fruits which the Congregation gathered in the diocese. The humility, the modesty, the contempt of himself, shown by Alphonso, touched all hearts as much as his sermons. At this time he suffered such violent toothaches as to cause convulsions. One evening he began his sermon in those words : "I care not how much I suffer, nor for any evil that can befall me ; it is sufficient that I have strength to say to you what I feel in my heart." He then went on to speak to them of dangerous intimacies ; he reproved mothers who allowed young persons to frequent their houses ; he reprimanded young people for their careless conduct ; often fatigue overpowered him, but he continued speaking during two hours, and at last had to be carried home from total inability to walk.

Generally in his sermons he seemed to be ravished out of himself, and one evening while he preached, God made him see in spirit what was passing at Ilicoto. "We are occupied here with the mission," he said, "and at this moment the devil is tormenting my poor children at *Ilicoto*." Next morning a lay-brother came to seek him, and spoke with him for three hours of the miseries they were enduring there.

The Archbishop came to *Caposeli*, and arrived during a sermon on the Blessed Virgin. He

was so much touched that he wept, and determined to assist daily at the sermons. The Archpriest Rossi arrived at this time with several other gentlemen, who resolved on contributing towards the establishment of the Congregation here. All seemed to go well, but it was necessary the devil should attempt to overturn it. A party among the clergy imagined the Archbishop wished to deprive them of their prerogatives, and on the 4th of June addressed to him a protestation against the new project. As soon as Alphonso heard this, he said to F. Robertis, "I like to see opposition, it is a mark that the devil apprehends defeat; but God will triumph."

The same day the Archbishop went to the hermitage, accompanied by the gentlemen friendly to the measure. The priest, D. Salvador Corona, a very learned man who had great influence with both clergy and people, attended to oppose the foundation in the name of the Chapter. Having entered the church to visit the Blessed Virgin, and running over in his mind thoughts hostile to the Congregation, he approached the altar dedicated to the Divine Mother. In a moment he was struck with apoplexy, and his mouth was twisted on one side. He immediately recognised the just punishment, and turning towards the Virgin, said, "Mother of my God, I protest that I have no longer the intention of opposing this foundation." Scarcely had he uttered these words than he recovered, and his mouth resumed its natural position.

Corona went immediately to the assembly,

and far from resisting the proposal, he now seconded it with all his eloquence ; but all of a sudden the Archbishop seemed to be seized with indecision, and spoke of delay. This uncertainty did not satisfy Alphonso ; he declared he had come to give a mission, not to found a house, and when the mission was over he would depart. Upon this the Archpriest Rossi burst into tears, and throwing himself at the feet of the Archbishop, besought him to arrange the affair at once. Accordingly on the 4th of June, 1746, the establishment of the Congregation was decided upon.

When the news spread at Caposeli, that the missionaries were to be established in the diocese, every one testified the most unbounded joy. In the evening every house was illuminated, and guns were fired, and fireworks displayed. A noble family in the neighbourhood put their forests at their disposal to supply wood for the buildings. The inhabitants had another consolation in the fulfilment of the prophecy of St. John Joseph of the Cross, that at the end of twenty years a devout and zealous community of missionaries would be established among them. The twenty years had just expired.

CHAPTER XXV.

Another attempt was made by the dissatisfied at Pagani, to obtain the overthrow of the Con-

gregation. The Grand Council having repulsed them, Cautaldi tried to obtain satisfaction from the commissary of the king, and this magistrate being deceived, had ordered the sequestrations of certain rents that had been assigned to the missionaries, and that they should be given to others. To embroil matters still more, Cautaldi made a donation to a priest who was related to him of certain property he had already given to the missionaries, and by these manoeuvres ceased not to keep them in continual disquiet.

At the same time he found a person who feigned to be a mediator between them, in order to lead them into a scrape. He proposed to the fathers Sportelli and Mazzini, to abstain from preaching in their own chapel, to give satisfaction to the curates, assuring them that this would restore tranquillity. The fathers were willing, provided this would put a stop to the annoyances. “Wait a little,” said the pretended mediator, “do as I advise, and peace will be restored after a time.” Despairing to dislodge the missionaries, his aim was to render them less useful. When the Bishop was informed of the proposal, he saw through the plot, and at once forbade them to enter into any compromise. He would not listen to their enemies, but promised to defend them at Rome or Naples, or wherever they should be attacked.

To annoy the Congregation, the curates invited the missionaries of the Propaganda to come to Pagani, and when they came endeavoured to defame Alphonso and his Congregation, but all

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to no purpose. Their slanders were disbelieved, and far from joining those who attacked the Congregation, they defended them with all their might.

Alphonso could not see without sorrow the vexations his companions had to endure, but this did not lessen his zeal; he continued to give missions in the country round about, which were always attended with the greatest success, vice disappearing, and virtue reigning in its stead.

Among the many places he had sanctified, the town of Foggia remained extremely devoted to Alphonso. But however much piety may reign in large towns, vice will always have its followers.

Towards the end of December, 1746, Foggia again invited him, and he eagerly yielded to the request; but on his arrival he discovered that a theatre with foreign comedians had been opened, and certain gentlemen had bound themselves to support it. This new occasion of sin grieved him exceedingly, and he did all in his power to engage them to send the comedians away, but without success; upon which, instead of commencing to preach as he had intended, he left the town, and when they would persuade him to stay, he replied, "We cannot at the same time serve God and the devil. Foggia will not listen to me, but God will lay *His heavy* hand upon her and chastise her for her libertinism." Scarcely had he departed when the town was shaken by a violent earthquake; they

sent after him, but he would not return at that time.

Tho building of the new house at Caposcli was now begun and carried on with great ardour. Tho gentlemen set to work and superintended the different quarters of the building, each placing himself at the head of a division, and in the evening arranging the work for the next day. Some cut wood, others carried stones, and at day-break some went through the villages exciting the people to get up and help. The ladies also lent a hand, and those who were hindered from coming in person sent deputies instead. On the 1st of May, 1748, the foundation-stone was blessed by Mgr. Amati, when persons of distinction and crowds of people came from all parts.

The Blessed Virgin wished to testify her approbation of this establishment, and to show in a special manner that the missionaries were her children. There lived in a neighbouring village a wretched being loaded with sin, who had for three years been confined to bed by a most painful illness; every night he saw the devil under the form of a goat place himself on his breast, and press his throat and his sides until he was almost choked. One morning when he awoke he saw the Blessed Virgin appear in his chamber radiant with glory, and accompanied by two angels. “My son,” she said to him, “how hast thou still the boldness to live in sin? quick, change your life; to-morrow thou shalt see my children of the house of Mater Domini. Confess

thee, repent of thy sins, and Jesus will pardon thee.” The vision disappeared, and the sinner felt reanimated, but without knowing what to think of what he had heard, for he knew neither of the mission nor of the establishment.

Next day he heard the bell asking what it was, they missionaries had arrived; full of respect one of them instantly. Facuolo went to him, when he occurred, and made his confession of tears. The father asked him in the habit of practising the Blessed Virgin; he replied that he had taken a vow to recite the Rosary daily and never omitted to practise it. He died during the mission, giving evidence of his true repentance.

Until now the Congregation had no regular novitiate, and Alphonsus was seriously about arranging one when they had received only clerical manner had been professed before the vicars, sub-deacons only being these made their novitiate in from village to village. A year he decided on admitting young men because they were less filled with the world, and consequently receive the impressions of grace. He thought of establishing the novitiate of Illiceto, and giving the direction to Cafaro; but the extreme poverty

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soon showed him that the earth was too hard to food such tender plants : the young people were discouraged, looked back, and withdrew their hand from the plough : many among them had not courage to declare their weakness to Father Cafaro, but fled secretly, escaping by the windows, as the doors were shut. Afflicted by the inconveniences of this house, and the inconstancy of the novices, he removed the novitiate to Ciorani the 1st of February, 1748. God blessed the arrangement, and there were soon twenty novices under Father Villani, whose conduct caused great consolation to Alphonso. He established a regulation, that during the year of the noviceship they should never study, but apply themselves exclusively to the consideration of eternal truths.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was at Illiceto Alphonso first began to publish. Until then he had laboured only for the countries in which he was placed ; but this was a field too narrow for his burning zeal; he would that all Christians should profit by the reflections he had made. When he lived in the world, he had found the Blessed Sacrament the object of his most tender affection, and the source of all his grace. He groaned over the indifference of men, and their estrangement from that adorable mystery, and he resolv-

cd to publish tho sentiments with which ho was penetrated towards tho Beloved of his soul, and arrange them in tho form of visits for each day of the month ; and as his affection for the most holy Virgin Mary was only inferior to that ho boro to her Son, he published also his sentiments of affection for her, in order to induce tho faithful to love and servo her.

This little work, which ho entitled “Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament, and the Most Holy Virgin Mary,” was everywhere received with applauso, and fully answered the purpose for which it was intended ; for before long almost every one had tho book in their hands, not only in tho kingdom of Naples, but throughout Italy. In 1777 Alphonso received a French translation of this little work taken from tho fiftieth Italian edition.

If his heart was afflicted to see the indifference of men towards the Blessed Sacrament, he was no less sorrowful at seeing their coldness towards Jesus crucified. “That man,” said he, “has no heart, or he has no faith, who is not afflicted at the sight of tho Crucifix.” This induced him to publish another little work, entitled, “Reflections and Affections on the Passion of Jesus Christ,” which ho also arranged in tho form of visits for tho convenience of the faithful.

When Alphonso embraced the ecclesiastical state, his uncle, Canon Matthew Gizzio, had urged him to take St. Theresa for his special advocate, and from that time ho had a peculiar affection for this Saint, having often in his

spiritual wants experienced the efficacy of her intercession. In order to please her, he strove to imitate her virtues, above all in her difficult vow of doing nothing but for God and for His greater glory. Desirous to see her honoured and imitated by others, he published several meditations, in which were comprised all the beautiful things that could be said in praise of the Saint, offering the collection to the devout souls who would prepare themselves for her Feast. This Novena in honour of St. Theresa was generally approved, and Alphonso received the special thanks of the Barefooted Carmelites. Considering the baneful effects of obscene songs on the young, and, on the contrary, the great good resulting from devout canticles, he exerted his genius for poetry in composing hymns to replace the scandalous songs of the day, and had the satisfaction of witnessing their beneficent effects. His poetry contains all that is beautiful in mystic theology, and may dispute the palm with the divine canticles of St. John of the Cross.

In order to awaken the zeal of the Bishops, he produced a little work on the precise obligations of the episcopate, which he transmitted to all the Bishops in Italy, many of whom wrote to him thanking and complimenting him on the occasion. Mgr. Salerno, Bishop of Molfotta, wrote to him as follows: "I have read your useful reflections to Bishops, and I am much edified. I see that it is great zeal, aided by much wisdom and profound science, which has led you to write it. Your Reverence has rendered a great

service to the Episcopate, and I thank you on my part ; but I fear the charity which has guided you in this pious occupation may not meet with the recompense it deserves.”

About this time he had publicly proclaimed his opinion regarding certain cases of conscience which had been considered reserved cases. This gave offence to a priest belonging to a religious house in the Pouille, who instead of discussing the subject wrote to him thus : “ Who art thou who comest out of the woods with the pretension of making thyself doctor, and giving laws to others ? ” and having nothing else to say he treated Alphonso as a heretic, and accused him of condemning vocal prayer. He replied to the accusation by saying, “ How can I proscribe vocal prayer, I who have made the vow daily to recite the Rosary of our Lady ; I who in all my missions exhort every family to recite it in common every evening ; and have we not established in our Congregation, that the Rosary accompanied by a meditation precede the grand exercises made in the church ? ” He finished his letter by thanking his accuser for the advice he had given him, without testifying the least resentment.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Alphonso was not alarmed by the obstacles that succeeded each other at Xocera ; on the

contrary, as a wise pilot he redoubled his vigilance as the tempest augmented, to save the vessel and bring it into the port. Seeing that the designs of his adversaries in attacking the establishments of Nocera and Pagani were to undermine the Congregation itself, he thought of the best means to put it once for all out of danger. The argument they constantly brought forward was, that no similar Congregation existed unauthorised by the King ; and in order to deprive his enemies of this pretext, and insure the existence of the houses already founded, he was determined in spite of every difficulty to obtain the necessary authorization. Immediately that the missions in the Pouillo were finished, he went in April, 1747, to Ciorani ; there he found the novitiate filled with virtuous young men and priests eminent for learning and sanctity. He then returned to Pagani, where he found the church frequented by persons of all conditions, the pious practices taught by the Congregation existing in all their vigour, and a confraternity of artisans, among whom were found persons eminent for their sanctity. The success of these two houses was a subject of great consolation for him, making him shed tears of joy. He thanked God for the success that had attended his labours, and hoped that the pains he had taken would not prove useless.

Arriving at Naples in the month of June, He immediately addressed himself to the Marquis Branconi, Minister of State. Before he would hear him say a word, he first announced

his determination to make him a Bishop. Alphonso was confounded by the proposition, which the Marquis did all in his power to persuade him to accept. "If you love me," said Alphonso, "never again speak to me of such a thing. I have abjured the world; its dignities can only inspire me with horror." The debate was an animated one, but he would not yield, and at length the Marquis promised to torment him no more on this subject.

After recommending to the Marquis the interests of the Congregation, he addressed himself to the Chamberlain, Don Bartholomew Rossi, to obtain for him an audience of the King. He had not long to wait; for one day as he was walking in the cloisters of St. Catherine occupied in saying his office, he was suddenly told the King waited for him. He wore then as usual an old patched cassock, and his beard unshaven; it was, however, in this miserable condition that he ran in all haste to the palace. Introduced to his majesty, he exposed to him in animated terms the multitude of souls groaning for want of spiritual succour, the ignorance in which the inhabitants of the country were plunged, and the deplorable effects thence resulting to the peace of the kingdom. He told him how urgently he desired to remedy such an evil, the zeal with which his companions burned, and the reforms they had already produced in so many dioceses. But the missionaries could not sustain themselves in a position so precarious, and being daily engaged in struggles which

threatened their existence it was necessary that his Majesty, who had already deigned to authorise individual establishments in the dioceses of Salerno, Nocera, Bovino, &c. should now recognise their institute for a Regular Congregation, and give it the same advantages enjoyed by the Fathers of St. Vincent of Paul, with the condition that they should be dependent on the King and on the Bishops. He presented to his Majesty the rules of the institute, explaining them in a few words. The heart of the pious monarch was touched; had it depended on him he would immediately have granted all that was desired; he took notes with his own hand, and placed the rules with the petition in the hands of Mgr. Celestine Galiano, his Grand Almoner, recommending him to examine them and make his report without delay.

Father Don Vincent Mandarini, Superior of the Congregation of the most Holy Sacrament, soon learned what was going on, and more anxious than ever for a reunion, he went to Ciorani, and in the name of himself and his companions, offered to embrace unreservedly the rule of Alphonso, to submit to his authority, and renounce all into his hands. He insisted on his agreeing to this; but Alphonso still refused. He was touched doubtless with the protestations of Mandarini, and believed him sincere; but he doubted if this union would be advantageous to the Congregation Mandarini had already founded, and he justly feared it might be hurtful to his own. "He," he said, "who has been accustomed to possess

and to command, will have much repugnance to see himself poor and deprived of his liberty. To-day, before he makes the vow of obedience, he is ready to sacrifice his own will ; but once bound, he will begin to repent of having submitted his opinions to another. You are sincere in wishing to submit to me, but be sure to-morrow your fervour will yield on reflection ; the remembrance of your liberty will torment you and your brethren, and the contagion of insubordination and regret would seize upon my own Congregation. It is thus [misfortune would menace two communities, and we ought to guard against this.”

Mandarini, thus repulsed by Alphonso, turned to another side. He knew that the success of the application made to the King depended on the Grand Almoner; and he hastened to interest influential persons, who besought him to take into consideration the plan proposed by Mandarinini, and to endeavour to promote a reunion. The Grand Almoner was persuaded, and represented to Alphonso that he ought not to reject the proposal. Alphonso now found himself in a great embarrassment: he could not contradict the Almoner, for fear of indisposing him towards the Congregation ; and on the other hand, he foresaw from the reunion only confusion and trouble. He explained to the Almoner the motives which inclined him to refuse, but he cut him short by saying, “I wish it.” Although much alarmed, he did not give up hope, but doubting his own judgment, he had recourse to

prayer, yielding himself entirely to the will of God.

In this state of things he began to look about for some influential persons who would interfere in his favour with the King and the Grand Almoner. He hardly took time to eat or sleep, and during the burning heat of the day he traversed the streets, going from one palace to another, although overpowered with fatigue and bathed in perspiration.

Alphonso exerted himself to the utmost to insure success, he was not less busy to overthrow his schemes. He was often not well received; many refused him an audience, and others listened coldly; and if he was received once, he was refused admittance when he came again. A volume might be filled with the affronts he received on these occasions. One day he had with difficulty been permitted by the valets of a certain prince to wait in the antechamber, when the princess who knew him happened to pass. Seeing him so poor and ragged in appearance, she exclaimed, "How dirty you are!" "I do not understand you," said Alphonso. "Ah, then," she said, turning her back upon him, "you are from Calabria." Many others received him however with marks of profound respect; in either case he was unmoved, always calm and serene.

The Almoner on examining the affair more closely was embarrassed between his desire of obliging Alphonso and his supposed duty to the state. Considering these difficulties, he on the

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21st of August declared himself against it, and added that a reunion with Mandarinini was consequently useless. This declaration afflicted Alphonso, but yet he did not lose courage. He put his confidence in G-od and tried to obtain from Heaven what man refused. The different houses of the Congregation commenced regular prayers on the occasion, masses were said, in the evening they prayed with fervour and exposed the Blessed Sacrament. Many religious houses united with them in prayer, while they themselves redoubled their penances and mortifications.

He went with Mandarinini five times to obtain an audience of tho Almoner, but was always refused ; yet he neither lost courage nor showed discontent. Persisting in his enterprise, he struggled against contempt, and seemed to brave it. A sixth time he went to the Grand Almoner, and was at last admitted, when he knew so well how to plead his cause that his Lordship could not refuse promising to protect him.

His Lordship, viewing the question both as a politician and as a prelate, placed before the King what he considered the advantages that would result from authorising the Congregation ; but in tho event of its being authorised, he wished them to unite with the Congregation of Mandarinini. Upon this point the Council of State was divided, and also upon certain other conditions not very satisfactory, so that at last it was decided the affair should stand over for the present, and continue to rest on its present precarious basis.

It was two days after thia decision, that Alphonso learned the result from Marquis' Branconi. He bowed his head, adoring the will of God in the will of his sovereign, and only said, "Fiat voluntas tua" that night he got no sleep. The King regretted this decision, and in order to comfort him sent a message by the Marquis, bidding him rest assured of his protection, and continue to labour with the same zeal to promote the glory of God and the good of the state.

Although Alphonso was vexed at the refusal he had met with, he did not allow himself to be cast down ; but one morning while he was saying mass, the devil attempted to destroy his peace of mind. Just before the consecration, he was made to see in spirit that this refusal of the King's would overturn his Congregation ; that when the decision would become known at Nocera, their adversaries would make it impossible for them to remain, and hence ruin would be brought upon all the other foundations. This temptation came so strongly, that, deprived for the moment of interior light, he ran in all haste bathed in perspiration to the house of Marquis Branconi, to tell him his fears before the despatch was sent oif. They did not open the door immediately, and Alphonso sat on the steps exposed to the gaze of the passers-by. Tho Marquis seeing him from a window, ordered him to be admitted instantly, and forbade his domestics ever to make him wait, let him come at whatever hour he might. He reminded Al-

phonso that the anterior decrees of the King were sufficient to sustain his institute at the present juncture, upon which he regained his calm, and recognised the temptation. After these last attempts K. Mandariui ceased to insist on the union of the two Congregations. It was not the will of God that they should be one, but two powerful institutions, to sustain the welfare of the church and the state.

Alphonso made yet another attempt in favour of his Congregation, but it also fell to the grounds lie explained to the King the impossibility of giving missions in many parts of the country where the spiritual destitution was great, because of their own poverty, and the poverty of the people, and he requested his Majesty to make them some allowance for the purpose. The King was touched. "The demand is just," he said: "we must try to furnish them with some subsidy." It was accordingly arranged that they should have the surplus revenues of the chapels of the Castle de Sangro in the Abruzzi; but the individuals who had the management pretended that there were no surplus revenues; they consequently got nothing.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Alphonso, whose heart was set on establishing his Congregation, which he regarded as the work of Heaven, sought to merit the grace by

devoting himself to every work that could extend the glory of God. During his stay in Naples he husbanded his time so well that not a moment was lost. He often went at the request of the director of the seminary in the town, to animate the young people by his exhortations to fly sin, to love Jesus Christ, to frequent the Sacraments, and to have a great devotion" to the Blessed Virgin. The Religious Orders were no less anxious to hear him ; he frequently visited convents of nuns who desired to have the affairs of their conscience regulated by him, and he gave retreats in different monasteries. At the same time Father Fatigati wished to have him at his College of the Holy Family. Alphonso had a special love for this College, established to promote the conversion of China. Considering the young men as so many apostles, he delighted to animate them with love for Jesus Christ, and zeal for the salvation of souls. The young men were charmed with his discourses, and always besought him to return. While he was enjoying these delightful labours, a storm was preparing to overtake him. The church of Palermo became vacant in the July of this year by the death of Mgr. Rossi, and his Majesty insisted that Alphonso should succeed him in that see. Knowing his talents and his worth he said to Marquis Branconi, " The Pope makes good promotions, but I will make one still better than the Pope." The Marquis was pleased with the election, and applauded it as a divine inspiration.

Having sent for Alphonso and made known

to him his Majesty's determination, he was as it were thunderstruck, and with tears endeavoured to show the Marquis the scandal that would be given to his companions if he broke the ties that connected him with the Congregation, especially at a moment such as this, when its very existence was menaced; he begged the Marquis to return his grateful thanks to the King for the honour he proposed conferring on him, but to explain the solemn vow he had taken to refuse all dignities, and the ruin it would cause were he to abandon his brethren at such a juncture. The Marquis was distressed to see the

fiction of Alphonso, he entered into his feelings, and promised to help him with the King. But the prince would not take a refusal; he said the Pope would dispense him from his vow, and that those made the best bishops who were unwilling to accept the dignity. This obstinacy of the King alarmed Alphonso; he foresaw that he would be supported by the Pope, and that in spite of himself he would be made bishop. The thought left him no repose by night or by day, and he wrote to F. Cafaro, his director, that he would sooner conceal himself in the depth of the forest than be made bishop. He wrote at the same time to all the houses of the Congregation to pray for him, and he had also recourse to many holy souls and houses of nuns to help him by their prayers, while he redoubled his austerities and penances.

During the whole month that the King persevered in his resolution Alphonso was in continual

fright. At length the Marquis succeeded in persuading his Majesty that he was far more useful as a missionary than he ever could be as Archbishop of Palermo ; and he consequently abandoned his resolution, though with much regret.

Many were offended because of the refusal of Alphonso, but when they considered the matter more calmly they were edified by his conduct, above all the King, who learnt better than ever how to appreciate the Congregation, and would fain have chosen bishops from among them; but Alphonso represented to the Marquis the evil consequences that might result by introducing a spirit of ambition, which would cause great evil to the mission. “The Church is not in want of bishops,” he said, “but of men who will labour for the salvation of souls in remote and destitute places.”

In the midst of all this business he had gone to Ciorani for a few days, when immediately on his return he was requested to preach the Novena of the Assumption in the Church of St. John Major. Although unprepared, he had not the courage to refuse, and the result was as miraculous as usual. He treated successively the humility of Mary, in opposition to the pride of man ; the ardent love of Mary [towards God, and the coldness of men ; the union of the will of Mary with the Divine Will, and the great opposition of the will of man to the Will of tGod. He depicted the precious death of the Blessed Virgin contrasted with the horrible death-bed of the

sinner ; he spoke of the assaults of the devil to which the sinner is delivered up at the moment of death, and the help the servants of Mary receive from her in this last hour. He drew a picture of the horror which seized the sinner at the sight of his damnation, contrasting it with the peace of those who die under the protection of Mary. He represented the happiness of those who die in a state of grace, and the misery of those who perish in their sin, animating all to implore the protection of Mary. He showed how certain salvation was for the faithful servant of Mary, and the care she took to procure their salvation. On the day of the Assumption he enraptured his audience by retracing the glorious triumph of Mary crowned in heaven. Each of his sermons occupied not less than one hour and a half. During this Novena thousands of souls awoke from sin, and, penetrated with a lively repentance, returned to God.

At this time Canon Nicolas Borgia, then Superior of the Apostolic Missions, invited Alphonso to give a retreat. During his discourses on that occasion, he spoke to them of the obligation they were under to make known Christ crucified, and not to preach to make themselves known. He grieved to see the measured style and far-fetched expressions which some of them had adopted, above all when treating of moral subjects or the lives of the Saints. He spoke with vehemence against a celebrated preacher lately dead, whom he said by his manner of preaching showed himself an enemy of souls and

a traitor to the word of God; and he blamed some among them who strove to imitate him. "Fill your discourses," said he, "with evangelical truths, without embarrassing yourselves with vain ornaments, which produce no fruit, but exhaust the preacher in seeking for them." This language offended some of the young missionaries at first, but afterwards they recognised the truth of what he said, and were filled with a salutary confusion.

During this sojourn in Naples he was one day celebrating mass in the church of the Fathers of the Oratory, when turning towards the assistants to give the communion, he observed a gentleman seated in the choir with his legs crossed. After having said "Ecce agnus Dei," and seeing this person still sitting and showing no sign of reverence towards the Holy Sacrament, he exclaimed, "Have you lost the use of your limbs that you cannot kneel?" The gentleman quite confused immediately knelt, but excessively provoked, he began to cough and make different noises until the end of mass, when he ran hastily into the sacristy to ask what wretched priest had said mass; but when he heard the name of Alphonso Liguori he felt greatly ashamed. During the time he spent in Naples he took no repose, always busy, always employed in procuring the salvation of his neighbour and the glory of God. For three weeks he suffered from a violent toothache, but never ceased his labours in consequence. At last being obliged to have the tooth extracted, he went to a miserable barber's shop,

like the lowest of the people; seeing a lay-brother who had followed him attempting to preserve the tooth, he flung it into a ditch. Towards the end of September he returned to Nocera.

At the beginning of the year 1748, Alphonso returned to Naples. Marquis Branconi then informed him that the King was dissatisfied that the Council of State had refused his request, and advised him to take advantage of the favourable feelings of the King towards him, and obtain a subsidy for his Congregation. Instead of this, he presented a new petition to obtain the confirmation of his institute, saying to the Marquis that he wished for nothing else; a mark of disinterestedness which pleased him, and induced him to present the petition himself to the King.

Canon Matthew Testa took a great interest in the affair, and spoke of it to the minister Tanucci, with whom he was very intimate. Tanucci promised, and as he had sufficient interest to carry the measure, Alphonso's hopes were at their height; but the political views which directed the minister did not accord with the pious views of the King, and again the business fell to the ground.

He had been scarcely twelve days in Naples

when he was seized with an asthma, so violent that he could not speak, and was almost dead. He was unable to say mass for some weeks, and forced to keep his bed, yet he nevertheless continued to give advice and consolation to those who came to him on affairs of conscience; the house was never empty. Immediately after his recovery, he began again to preach and give spiritual exercises. All ranks attended these instructions, and multitudes were converted.

This could not go on without exciting opposition ; on one occasion, when speaking of the extreme goodness shown by our Saviour in the Sacrament of the altar, where He is always ready to give audience, he used the following words of St. Theresa's: "It is not thus with the kings of the earth ; they give audience only a few times in the course of the year, and how much it costs one to obtain an audience ! and then no one can speak as they would wish to do, nor with the same confidence with which all can go to Jesus Christ in this Sacrament, and at any moment. There we may all speak to Him as a friend with his friend, and expose our wants to Him with the utmost confidence." Who would imagine that these words of St. Theresa could be construed into an insult to the King ? Every one knew the respect Alphonso bore to his sovereign. Yet there was one person present who, thinking to ingratiate himself with his Majesty, added to these words all that his wickedness could suggest, and represented Alphonso as a man discontented with the King, and who would

misrepresent him to his subjects. The accusation was listened to by Marquis Tanucci, who, being a stranger, fwas unacquainted with his integrity, and threatened to banish him from Naples. The affair became public, and Alphonso was looked upon as a guilty person about to be banished for disrespect to his sovereign.

It was not until six days after that he heard from one of the Canons the bad construction that had been put upon his words. He was extremely annoyed at being accused of disrespect towards a sovereign whom he esteemed so highly, to say nothing of the mischief likely to result towards his Congregation. He went immediately to Cardinal Spinelli, to implore his protection. The Cardinal was extremely indignant at the calumny. He then went to Marquis Branconi, who, convinced of his respect for his sovereign, bid him continue his apostolic labours and fear nothing, for the King knew him too well to lend an ear to such a report. The Cardinal and the Marquis both spoke to Tanucci, who was soon undeceived, and from that time held Alphonso in the highest esteem and veneration.

In the midst of all these anxieties, strong in the purity of his intentions, he never interrupted his missionary labours, and during his stay in Naples every moment was employed for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Through the interest of Marquis Branconi he obtained another audience of the king, when he strove to convinco him of the necessity of

his approbation for the new-born Congregation, in order to sustain it against the attacks of its enemies. He assured his Majesty that he was indifferent to the temporal regulations he might be pleased to make ; he had no desire that his Congregation should acquire wealth, a simple maintenance was all he looked for. The King was much pleased with all he heard, and dismissed him, bidding him take courage and rely upon his protection.

Before leaving Naples he gathered another rich and abundant harvest from the army. He was requested to give a retreat in the garrison of Pizzofalconi, which he opened on the 28th of March. Prince Castropignano assisted with the state major and many other cavaliers. All admired the apostolic liberty with which he spoke. When the prince saw the effects produced on the officers, he besought him to give the spiritual exercises to the men. The only time he had for this was immediately after his meeting the officers, when he never spoke less than two hours. Nevertheless he consented, and gave two hours more to the soldiers, although he suffered much from the excessive cold of the church. On the 7th of April these exercises terminated ; scandals had disappeared from among the soldiery, blasphemies were no longer heard, taverns were deserted, and lewd women banished from their quarters. He procured for them books of devotion, and as they could not afford to purchase, he furnished a little library for them. An eye-witness declared the soldiers

might be soon frequenting the church with their books in their hands, looking more like the novices of a rigid community than soldiers. The effect produced on the officers was still greater ; five among them quitted the service and entered religious houses ; and when he left Naples to return to Ciorani, he was regretted by all.

The Congregation at Nocera was still agitated by the tempest, when an event occurred, which, though melancholy in its outset, brought peace at last to the establishment there. Don Dominic de Majo, a dean in the neighbourhood, had been prejudiced against them, and abstained from having any communication with them. This priest had a young relative who led a very debauched life, and whom he had often remonstrated with, because of his irregularities. Offended by his fraternal warnings and advice, this young man overtook him one evening as he was returning home, and falling upon him like a madman beat him on the head with some sharp instrument and left him for dead. He was carried into a neighbouring convent apparently dying, which when our Father Mazzini heard he ran in all haste to render him assistance, and continued to attend him with the utmost care until he was convalescent. The other fathers were also assiduous in their attentions to the worthy dean, and such was the change produced in his mind towards them, that he could think of nothing but how to recompense their services. His conduct disconcerted all the malcontents, for Mgr. Volpi,

delighted at gaining him, joined with him in labouring to disabuse the superiors of religious houses and the few priests who still stood out against them, and as soon as the leaders of the conspiracy were convinced of the pernicious influence of their proceedings, peace was immediately restored.

Towards the middle of October, Alphonso went to Pagani, and a few days previous the King's council had decided in his favour, and against Cantaldi ; but having the tranquillity of the Congregation more at heart than its temporal interests, he succeeded, though with difficulty, in persuading the Bishop to allow him to resign at once the donations made by Cantaldi, only requesting him as a favour to pay a debt of nine hundred ducats, contracted in building. This disinterested conduct gained him more than ever the esteem of good men. He was applauded throughout Naples as well as at Nocera ; and as for the Dean he could never cease expressing his admiration ; he came to make a retreat at Ciorani, and ever after continued to be a powerful protector of the institute in every emergency.

Mgr. Volpi, by the consummate wisdom of all his actions, contributed much to the re-establishment of peace. A just appreciator of the merits of others, he knew how to value Alphonso. He frequented the house, and consulted the missionaries on all occasions of difficulty. He gave audiences in their house, so that their enemies had either to come thither, or abstain

from speaking with him ; and sometimes he did not scruple to make them wait for hours before he saw them. Ho ordered a great number to come to the house for spiritual exercises, to be instructed in the rubrics, or to reform their conduct, and obliged them to bring a certificate from the Fathers as to how they had made their retreat. The esteem shown by the Bishop ended in concilating tho respect and veneration of their greatest enemies.

CHAPTER XXX.

Alphonso had left Naples and returned to Ciorani to rest from his fatigues, but invited by the people and tho neighbouring curates, his burning zeal would allow him no repose, and he continued his warfare against the strongholds of Satan in every direction and with his accustomed success.

There had been so many demands upon him in Naples with which ho could not comply during his last visit, that he resolved on returning thither in October. “Who knows,” said he, “what God requires of me; perhaps the predetermination of certain souls may bo attached to some one of my sermons?” Ho commenced by opening a mission in tho church of St. Anna de Palazzo. The people went in crowds ; no one had ever seen such multitudes in that church.

The most careless and indifferent libertines, when they heard that Father Liguori was to preach, could not resist the impulse which urged them to go and hear him ; numbers were converted who had never before approached the tribunal of penance, it seemed as if he had only to cast the net, to receive the miraculous draught of fishes.

He had no sooner concluded this mission than he was sent for to preach penance in the suburb of St. Anthony, that suburb to which, by the endeavours of F. Sarnelli, the unfortunate women of the town had been compelled to withdraw. His labours were not unfruitful ; many of these unfortunate creatures touched by grace, began to detest their crimes ; numbers were placed in houses of refuge, others were taken care of by charitable individuals, and they all persevered in their amendment. He saved besides a great number of young girls, who though not yet embarked in the ways of sin, were preparing for it. The fruits of this mission were had in remembrance for many a year.

He also visited and preached in many houses of religious women ; while the most eminent in the priesthood, and the most virtuous among the laity, daily came to him for instruction and advice, he had scarcely time to breathe, and had difficulty in finding leisure to recite his office and perform his other devotional exercises. Cardinal Spinelli, full of consolation at seeing the wonderful conversions effected by Alphonso, desired him to give a retreat in the cathedral.

The church could scarcely contain the multitude. There was but a small proportion of the common people, for it was filled by the élite of Naples. An eye-witness has remarked, that eternity only can disclose the wonders of grace then operated, and this even among many professed infidels.

At length leaving the city to the care of the numerous able and holy men who resided in her, Alphonso departed for the country, to distribute the bread of eternal life among the hungry and the destitute. At the town of Vietri, a daring fellow, renowned for his incredulity, went one day into the church, for the purpose, he said, of criticising the sermon. He had not listened long, when entering into himself he recognised his deplorable condition, and full of repentance detested his former blindness. “The sermons of other preachers,” said he, “speak but to the mind of the hearers; but the sermons of Father Alphonso penetrate to the heart.” He immediately went to confession, and persevered to the end.